INTRODUCTION TO SALLY

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN"

Palnackie — Port ~~House~~.

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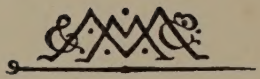

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INTRODUCTION TO SALLY

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN"

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I

§

Mr. Pinner was a God-fearing man, who was afraid of everything except respectability. He married Mrs. Pinner when they were both twenty, and by the time they were both thirty if he had had to do it again he wouldn't have. For Mrs. Pinner had several drawbacks. One was, she quarrelled; and Mr. Pinner, who prized peace, was obliged to quarrel too. Another was, she appeared to be unable to have children; and Mr. Pinner, who was fond of children, accordingly couldn't have them either. And another, which while it lasted was in some ways the worst, was that she was excessively pretty.

This was most awkward in a shop. It continually put Mr. Pinner in false positions. And it seemed to go on so long. There seemed to be no end to the years of Mrs. Pinner's prettiness. They did end, however; and when she was about thirty-five, worn out by her own unquiet spirit and the work of helping Mr. Pinner in the shop, as well as keeping house for him, which included doing everything single-handed, by God's mercy she at last began to fade.

Mr. Pinner was pleased. For though her behaviour had been beyond criticism, and she had invariably, by a system of bridling and head-tossing, kept off familiarity on the part of male customers, still those customers had

undoubtedly been more numerous than the others, and Mr. Pinner hadn't liked it. It was highly unnatural, he knew, for gentlemen on their way home from their offices to wish to buy rice, for instance, when it had been bought earlier in the day by their wives or mothers. There was something underhand about it; and he, who being timid was also honest, found himself not able to be happy if there were a shadow of doubt in his mind as to the honourableness of any of his transactions. He never got used to these purchases, and was glad when the gradual disappearance of his wife's beauty caused the gradual disappearance of the customers who made them. Money, it was true, was lost, but he preferred to lose it than to make it by means that verged in his opinion on shady.

As Mrs. Pinner faded and custom dropped off, he and she had more time on their hands, and went to bed earlier; for Mrs. Pinner, who had an untiring tongue when she was awake, and inveigled her husband into many quarrels, was obliged to leave off talking when she was asleep, and he, pretending it was because of the gas bills, got her to go to bed earlier and earlier. Besides, he wished more heartily than ever that she might have a child, if only to take her attention off him. But he longed for a child himself as well, for he was affectionate without passion, and it was his secret opinion—all his opinions were secret, because if he let them out Mrs. Pinner quarrelled—that such men are born good fathers. Something, however, had to be born besides themselves before they could show their capabilities, and Mrs. Pinner, who was passionate without affection, which in Mr. Pinner's opinion was rather shocking, for she sometimes quite frightened him in bed, and he was sure it

wasn't at all respectable for a wife to do that, especially as next day she didn't seem to like him any better than before, hadn't been able to produce what was needed.

Certain it was that he couldn't become a father without her. In this one thing he depended utterly on her; for though she believed she ruled him through and through, in every other matter at the back of his soul Mr. Pinner always secretly managed very well for himself. But here he was helpless. If she didn't, he couldn't. Nothing doing at all without Mrs. Pinner.

Therefore, as a first step, every evening at nine o'clock, instead of at eleven or twelve as had been their habit in the busy, tiring years, after a day of only too much leisure they went to bed. There they tossed, because of its being so early; or, rather, Mrs. Pinner tossed, while he lay quiet, such being his nature. And whether it was these regular hours, or whether it was God, who favours families, at last taking pity on the Pinners, just as Mr. Pinner was coming to the conclusion that he had best perhaps now let well alone, for he and his wife were drawing near forty, Mrs. Pinner inexplicably began to do that which she ought to have done twenty years earlier, and proceeded to go through those bodily changes, one after the other and all strictly according to precedent, which were bound to end, though for many months Mr. Pinner didn't believe it, in either a boy or a girl; or perhaps—this was his secret longing—in both.

They ended in one girl.

'I'm blest,' said Mr. Pinner to himself, seeing his wife's complete, impassioned absorption, 'if that kid ain't goin' to be my salvation.'

And he wanted to have it christened Salvation, but Mrs. Pinner objected, because it wasn't a girl's name

at all, she said; and, as she had no heart just then for quarrelling, they compromised on Salvatia.

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Thus was Salvatia projected into the world, who afterwards became Sally. Her parents struggled against her being called Sally, because they thought it common. Their struggles, however, were vain. People were unteachable. And the child herself, from the moment she could talk, persisted in saying she was Sally.

She grew up so amazingly pretty that it soon became the Pinners' chief concern how best to hide her. Such beauty, which began by being their pride, quickly became their anxiety. By the time Sally was twelve they were always hiding her. She was quite easy to hide, for she went meekly where she was told and stayed there, having not only inherited her father's mild goodness, but also, partly from him and more from some unknown forbear, for she had much more of it than Mr. Pinner at his most obliging, a great desire to give satisfaction and do what was asked of her. She had none of that artfulness of the weak that was so marked a feature of Mr. Pinner. She never was different at the back of her mind from what she was on the surface of her behaviour. Life hadn't yet forced her, as it had forced Mr. Pinner, to be secretive; it hadn't had time. Besides, said Mr. Pinner to himself, she wasn't married.

From her mother she had inherited nothing but her looks; translating, however, the darkness into fairness, and the prettiness into beauty,—beauty authentic, indisputable, apparent to the most unobservant. Mr. Pinner was divided between pride and fear. Mrs. Pinner concentrated entirely on her child, and was the

best of prudent mothers. There, in their back parlour, they kept this secret treasure, and, like other treasures, its possession produced anxiety as well as joy. Till she was about twelve she did as other children, and went off to school by herself every day, illuminating Islington, as she passed along its streets, like a flame. Then the Pinners got a fright: she was followed. Not once or twice, but several times; and came home one day happy, her hands full of chocolates she said a gentleman had given her.

The Pinners began to hide her. Mrs. Pinner took her to school and fetched her away again every day, and in between hid her in the back parlour. Mr. Pinner did Mrs. Pinner's work as well as his own while she was gone, and just managed to because his wife was fleet of foot and ran most of the way; otherwise it would have broken his back, for he wasn't able to afford to keep an assistant, and had little staying power. At night, when the dear object of their love and fear was asleep, they earnestly in bed discussed what was best to be done so as to secure to her the greatest happiness together with the greatest safety. Their common care and love had harmonised them. In the child they were completely at one. No longer did Mrs. Pinner rail, and Mr. Pinner, after a time, be obliged to answer back; no longer was he forced, contrary to his nature, into quarrels. Peace prevailed, and the affection that comes from a common absorbing interest.

'It's all that there Sally,' said Mr. Pinner, content at last in his married life, and unable—for he had few words—to put what he felt more glowingly.

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But when Sally was sixteen Mrs. Pinner died ; died in a few days, of a cold no worse than dozens of colds she had caught in her life and hadn't died of.

Mr. Pinner was left with no one to help him, either in his shop or with Sally. It was an immense misfortune. He didn't know which way to turn. He lived within the narrowest margin of safety, for in Islington there were many grocers, and he was one of the very smallest, never having had any ambition beyond the ambition for peace and enough to eat.

It was impossible for him to run the shop without help, and without the shop he and Sally would starve, so there was nothing for it but to let her take her mother's place ; and within a week his custom was doubled, and went on doubling and doubling till the local supply of males was exhausted.

It was a repetition of twenty years earlier, only much worse. Mr. Pinner was most unhappy. Sally couldn't help smiling back when anybody smiled at her,—it was her nature ; and as everybody, the minute they saw her, did smile, she was in a continual condition of radiance, and the shop seemed full of light. Mr. Pinner was distracted. He hired an assistant, having made money, announced that his daughter had gone away to boarding-school, and hid her in the back parlour. The custom dropped off, and the assistant had to go. Out came Sally again, and back came the custom. What a situation, thought Mr. Pinner, irritable and perspiring. He was worn out keeping his eye on Sally, and weighing out coffee and bacon at the same time. His responsibilities crushed him. The only solution of his difficulties would

be to get the girl married to some steady fellow able to take care of her. There seemed to him to be no steady fellows in the crowd in his shop, except the ones who were already married, and they couldn't really be steady or they wouldn't be there. How could a married man be called steady who eagerly waited for Sally to sell him groceries he would only afterwards have to conceal from his wife? While as for the rest, they were a weedy lot of overworked and underpaid young clerks who couldn't possibly afford to marry. Sally smiled at them all. She had none of the bridling, of the keep-off-the-grass-*if*-you-please, of her mother.

'For mercy's sake,' Mr. Pinner would hiss in her ear, tugging her elbow as he hurried past, 'don't go keepin' on makin' pleasant faces at 'em like that.'

But what faces was she to make, then? All Sally's faces were pleasant from the point of view of the beholder, whatever sort she made; and if she, by a great effort, and contrary to her nature, frowned at anybody, as likely as not she would be gaped at harder than ever, and asked if she wouldn't mind doing that again.

Mr. Pinner was distracted. Even the clergy came to his shop,—came with breezy tales of being henpecked, and driven out by tyrant wives to purchase currants; and even the doctor came,—old enough surely, Mr. Pinner thought, to be ashamed of himself, running after a girl he had himself brought into the world, and pretending that what he was after was biscuits.

What he was after was, very plainly, not biscuits, nor were the clergy after currants. One and all were after Sally. And it horrified Mr. Pinner, who took round the plate on Sundays, that a child of his, so good and modest, should be the innocent cause of producing in the hearts

of her fellow-creatures a desire to sin. That they desired to sin was only too evident to Mr. Pinner, driven by fear to the basest suspicions. These married gentlemen—what could it be but sin they had in their minds? They wished to sin with Sally, to sin the sin of sins; with his Sally, his spotless lamb, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

For a year Mr. Pinner endured it, struggling with his responsibilities and his black suspicions. The milk of his natural kindliness and respect for his betters went sour. He grew to hate the gentry. His face took on a twist of fear that became permanent. The other grocers were furious with him, accusing him among themselves of using his daughter as a decoy; and unable to bear this, for it of course got round to him, and worn out by the constant dread lest worse were yet to come, and some fine day a young whipper-snapper of a lord should be going for a walk in Islington and chance to stroll into his shop and see Sally, and then good-bye to virtue—for was any girl good enough and modest enough to stand out against the onslaughts of a lord? Mr. Pinner asked himself, who had never consciously come across any lords, and therefore was apt to think of them highly—Mr. Pinner determined to move.

He moved. After several Sundays given up to fruitless and ill-organised excursions into other suburbs, he heard by chance of a village buried far away in what seemed to him, whose England consisted of Hampstead Heath, Hampton Court, and, once, Southend, a savage and uninhabited district in Cambridgeshire, where the man who kept its one shop was weary of solitude, and wanted to come nearer London. What could be nearer London than London itself? Mr. Pinner hurried to

Woodles, leaving Sally under the strictest vows not to put her terribly complicating nose out of doors.

He thought he had never seen such a place. Used to streets and crowds, he couldn't have believed there were spots in the world so empty. It was raining, and there wasn't a soul about. A few cottages, the shop, a church and vicarage, and a sad wet pig grunting along a ditch,—that was all. Three miles from a branch-line station, embedded in a network of muddy lanes, and the Vicar —Mr. Pinner inquired—seventy-eight with no sons, Woodles was surely the ideal place for him and Sally. Over a bottle of ginger beer he made friends with the shopkeeper, and arranged that he should come up to Islington with a view to exchanging. He came; and the exchange, after some regrettable incidents in connection with Sally which very nearly upset the whole thing, was made, and by Christmas Islington knew the Pinners no more.

§

All went well at Woodles for the first few weeks. It was a hamlet, Mr. Pinner rejoiced to discover, lived in practically exclusively by ladies. These ladies, attracted to it by the tumbledownness of its cottages, which made it both picturesque and cheap, had either never had husbands or had lost them, and accordingly, as so often happens in such circumstances, were poor. Well, Mr. Pinner didn't mind that. He only wanted to live. He had no desire to make more than was just necessary to feed Sally. More merely meant responsibility and bother, and of those he had as much as he could do with because of Sally. He settled down, very content and safe among his widow and virgin customers,

and spent a thankful Christmas, entering with hope into the New Year.

Then, one day towards the end of January, two young men rent the peace of the sunny afternoon with the unpleasant noise motor-bicycles, rushing at high speed, appear, Mr. Pinner thought, kindly even towards these, not to be able to help making, and a lady customer who chanced to be in the shop remarked, 'It has begun.'

Mr. Pinner inquired politely what had begun, and the lady said term had, and Mr. Pinner, who didn't know what she meant but was unwilling to show his ignorance, said, 'And high time too.'

After that, hardly an afternoon went by without young men hurrying through Woodles. Sometimes they were on motor-bicycles, sometimes they were on horses, sometimes they were in cars, but always they hurried. Where did they all come from? Mr. Pinner was astonished, and wondered uneasily whether Sally were not somehow at the bottom of it. But she couldn't have been, for they never so much as glanced at the shop window, from behind whose jars of bulls'-eyes and mounds of toffee he and Sally secretly observed them.

Then, gradually, he became aware of Cambridge. He hadn't given it a thought when he came to Woodles. It was ten miles away—a place, he knew, where toffs were taught, but a place ten miles away hadn't worried him. There he had changed, on that first visit, for the branch-line that took him within three miles of Woodles, and the village, asleep beneath its blanket of rain, had been entirely deserted, the last word in dank and misty isolation. And when he moved in, it was still asleep—asleep, this time, in the silence of the Christmas vacation, and only faintly stirred every now and again

by the feeble movements of unmated ladies. It was so much out of the way that if it hadn't been for Cambridge it would have slept for ever. But young men are restless and get everywhere. Bursting with energy, they rushed through Woodles as they rushed through all places within rushable distance. But they rushed, they didn't stop; and Mr. Pinner consoled himself with that, and also with the knowledge he presently acquired that it was only for a few months—weeks, one might almost say, in the year, that this happened.

He bade Sally keep indoors during the afternoon hours, and hoped for the best.

§

Then, on a gusty afternoon in early March, when the mud in the lanes had turned to dust and was tearing in clouds down the street, the door opened violently, because of the wind, and a young man was blown in, and had to use all his strength to get the door shut again.

No sound of a motor had preceded him; he appeared just as one of the ladies might have appeared; and Sally was in the shop.

She was on some steps, rummaging aloft among the tins of Huntley and Palmer, and he didn't immediately see her, and addressed himself to Mr. Pinner.

'Have you any petrol?' he asked.

'No, sir,' said Mr. Pinner quickly, hoping he would go away at once without noticing Sally. 'We don't keep it.'

'Do you know where I can——'

The young man broke off, and stood staring upwards. 'Christ'—he whispered under his breath, 'Christ——'

'Now, now,' said Mr. Pinner with extreme irritability,

only too well aware of what had happened, and in his fear slapping his knuckly little hand on the counter, ' no blasphemy 'ere, sir, if *you* please——'

But he needn't have been so angry and frightened, for this, if he had only known it, was his future son-in-law ; the person who was to solve all his problems by taking over the responsibility of Sally. In a word it was, as Mr. Pinner ever afterwards described him, Mr. Luke.

II

§

At the date when he went into the shop at Woodles in search of petrol, young Luke, whose Christian name was Jocelyn, was a youth of parts, with an inventive and inquiring brain, and a thirst some of his friends at Ananias were unable to account for after knowledge. His bent was scientific; his tastes were chemical. He wished to weigh and compare, to experiment and prove. For this a quiet, undisturbed life was necessary, in which day after day he could work steadily and without interruption. What he had hoped for was to get a fellowship at Ananias. Instead, he got Sally.

It was clear to Jocelyn, considering his case later, that the matter with him at this time was youth. Nature had her eye on him. However much he wished to use his brains, and devote himself to the pursuit of scientific truth, she wished to use the rest of him, and she did. He had been proof against every other temptation she had plied him with, but he wasn't proof against Sally; and all the things he had thought, and hoped, and been interested in up to then, seemed, directly he saw Sally, dross. A fever of desire to secure this marvel before any one else discovered her sent him almost out of his mind. He was scorched by passion, racked by fear. He knew he was no good at all from the marriage point

of view, for he had no money hardly, and was certain he would be refused, and then—what then ?

He need not have been afraid. At the word marriage Mr. Pinner, who had been snarling at him on his visits like an old dog who has been hurt and suspects everybody, nearly fell on his neck. Sally was in the back parlour. He had sent her there at once every time young Luke appeared in the shop, and then faced the young man defiantly, leaning with both hands on the counter, looking up at him with all his weak little bristles on end, and inquiring of him angrily, ' Now what can I do for you to-*day*, sir ? '

At the end of a week of this, Jocelyn, wild with fear lest the other inhabitants of the colleges of Cambridge, so perilously close for cars and bicycles, should discover and carry the girl off before he did, proposed through Mr. Pinner.

' I want to marry your daughter,' he stammered, his tongue dry, his eyes burning. ' I must see her. I must talk—just to find out if she thinks she wouldn't mind. It's absurd, simply absurd, never to let me say a word to her——'

And Mr. Pinner, instead of pushing him out of the shop as Jocelyn, knowing his own poverty, expected, nearly fell on his neck.

' Marry her ? You did say marry, didn't you, sir ? ' he said in a trembling voice, flushing right up to his worried, kind blue eyes.

He could scarcely believe that he heard right. This young gentleman—a car, and all—nothing against him as far as he could see, and he hoped he could see as far as most people, except his youth. . . . But if he hadn't been so young he mightn't so badly have wanted to

marry Sally, Mr. Pinner told himself, his eyes, now full of respect and awe, on the eager face of the suitor, for from experience he knew that everybody had wanted to do something badly with Sally, but it had hardly ever been marriage.

'If your intentions is honourable——' began Mr. Pinner.

'Honourable! Good God. As though——'

'Now, now, sir,' interrupted Mr. Pinner gently, holding up a deprecating hand, 'no need to get swearing. No need at *all*.'

'No, no—of course not. I beg your pardon. But I must see her—I must be able to talk to her——'

'Exactly, sir. Step inside,' said Mr. Pinner, opening the door to the back room.

§

There sat Sally, mending in the lamplight.

'We got a visitor,' said Mr. Pinner, excited and proud. 'But I'm blest, sir,' he added, turning to Jocelyn, 'if I knows what to call you.'

'Luke—Jocelyn Luke,' murmured the young man as one in a dream, his eyes on Sally.

'Mr. Luke,' introduced Mr. Pinner, pleased, for the name smacked agreeably of evangelists. 'And Salvatia is *'er* name, ain't it, Salvatia? 'Er baptismal name, any'ow,' he added, because of the way Sally was looking at him. 'Sometimes people calls 'er Sally, but there ain't no *need* to, Mr. Luke—there ain't no *need* to at all, sir. Get another cup, will you, Salvatia?—and let's 'ave our tea.'

And while she was getting the cup out of some back scullery place, wondering at suddenly becoming Salvatia,

her father whispered to the suitor, 'You go a'ead, sir, when she come back, and don't mind me.'

Jocelyn didn't mind him, for he forgot him the instant Sally reappeared, but he couldn't go ahead. He sat dumb, gaping. The girl was too exquisite. She was beauty itself. From the top of her little head, with its flame-coloured hair and broad low brow and misty eyes like brown amber, down along the slender lines of her delicate body to where her small feet were thrust into shabby shoes, she was, surely, perfect. He could see no flaw. She seemed to light up the room. It was like, thought young Luke, for the first time in the presence of real beauty, suddenly being shown God. He wanted to cry. His mouth, usually so firmly shut, quivered. He sat dumb. So that it was Mr. Pinner who did what talking there was, for Sally, of the class whose womenfolk do not talk when the father brings in a friend to tea, said nothing.

Her part was to pour out the tea; and this she did gravely, her eyelashes, which just to see was to long to kiss, lying duskily on her serious face. She was serious because the visitor hadn't yet smiled at her, so she hadn't been able to smile back, and Jocelyn accordingly didn't yet know about her smile; and Mr. Pinner, flushed with excitement, afraid it couldn't be really true, sure at the same time that it was, entertained the suitor as best he could, making little jokes intended to put him at his ease and encourage him to go ahead, while at the same time trying to convey to Sally, by frowns and nods, that if she chose to make pleasant faces at this particular young gentleman she had his permission to do so.

The suitor, however, remained silent, and Sally obtuse. Her father had never behaved like this before,

and she had no idea what it was all about. It was hard work for one, like Mr. Pinner, unaccustomed to social situations requiring tact and experience, and he perspired. He was relieved when his daughter cleared away the tea and went off with it into the scullery to wash up, leaving him alone with his young guest, who sat, his head sunk on his breast, following the girl with his eyes till the door was shut on her. Then, turning to her father, his thin face working with agitation, he began to pour out the whole tale of his terrible unworthiness and undesirability.

'Ere,' said Mr. Pinner, pushing a tin of the best tobacco he stocked towards his upset visitor, 'light up, won't you, sir?'

The young man took no notice of the tobacco, and Mr. Pinner, listening attentively to all he was pouring out, couldn't for the life of him see where the undesirability and unworthiness came in.

'She's a good girl,' said Mr. Pinner, not filling his pipe either, from politeness, 'as good a girl as ever trod this earth. And what I always say is that no good man is unworthy of the goodest girl. That's right, ain't it? Got to be good, of course. Beg pardon, sir, but might I ask—' he sank his voice to a whisper, glancing at the scullery door—'if you're a *good* man, sir? I should say, gentleman. It's a ticklish question to 'ave to ask, I know, sir, but 'er mother would 'ave wished——'

'I don't drink, I don't bet, and I'm not tangled up with any woman,' said Jocelyn. 'I suppose that's what you mean?'

'Then where's all this 'ere undesirable come in?' inquired Mr. Pinner, puzzled.

'I'm poor,' said the suitor briefly.

'Poor. That's bad,' agreed Mr. Pinner, shaking his head and screwing up his mouth. He knew all about being poor. He had had, first and last, his bellyful of that.

And yet on being questioned, as Mr. Pinner felt bound in duty to question, it turned out that the young gentleman was very well off indeed. He had £500 a year certain, whatever he did or didn't do, and to Mr. Pinner, used to counting in pennies, this not only seemed enough to keep a wife and family in comfort, but also in style.

§

Sally came back, and Mr. Pinner, inspired, lifted a finger, said ''Ark,' gave them to understand he heard a customer, without actually saying he did, which would have been a lie, and went away into the shop.

Sally stood there, feeling awkward. Jocelyn had got up directly she came in, and she supposed he was going to wish her a good evening and go; but he didn't. She therefore stood first on one foot and then on the other, and felt awkward.

'Won't you,' Jocelyn breathed, stretching out a hand of trembling entreaty, for he was afraid she might disappear again, 'won't you sit down?'

'Well,' said Sally shyly, 'I don't mind if I do——' And for the first time Jocelyn heard the phrase he was later on to hear so often, uttered in the accent he was to try so hard to purify.

She sat down on the edge of the chair at the other side of the table. She wasn't accustomed to sitting idle and didn't know what to do with her hands, but she was sure it wouldn't be manners to go on mending socks while a gentleman was in the room.

Jocelyn sat down too, the table between them, the light from the oil lamp hanging from the ceiling beating down on Sally's head.

'And Beauty was made flesh, and dwelt among us,' he murmured, his eyes burning.

'Pardon?' said Sally, polite, but wishing her father would come back.

'You lovely thing—you lovely, lovely thing,' whispered Jocelyn hoarsely, his eyes like coals of fire.

At this Sally became thoroughly uneasy, and looked at him in real alarm.

'Don't be frightened. Your father knows. He says I may——'

'Father?' she repeated, much surprised.

'Yes, yes—I asked him. He says I may. He says I may—may talk to you, make friends with you. That is,' stammered Jocelyn, overcome by her loveliness, 'if you'll let me—oh, if you'll let me. . . .'

Sally was astonished at her father. 'Well I never did,' she murmured courteously. 'Fancy father.'

'Why? Why? Don't you want to? Won't you —don't you want to?'

'Wouldn't say *that*,' said Sally, shifting in her chair, and struggling to find the polite words. 'Wouldn't exactly say as 'ow I don't *want* to.'

'Then you—you'll let me take you out? You'll let me take you somewhere to tea? You'll let me fetch you in the car—you'll let me, won't you? To-morrow?' asked Jocelyn, leaning further across the table, his arms stretched along it towards her, reaching out to her in entreaty.

'Father——'

'But he says I may. It's with his permission——'

'Tea too?' asked Sally, more and more astonished. 'It ain't much *like* 'im,' she said, full of doubts.

Whereupon Jocelyn got up impetuously, and came round to her with the intention of flinging himself at her feet, and on his knees beseeching her to come out with him—he who in his life had never been on his knees to anybody.

'Oh, Salvatia!' he cried, coming round to her, holding out both his hands

She hastily pushed back her chair and slipped out of it beyond his reach, sure this wasn't proper. No gentleman had a right to call a girl by her Christian name without permission asked and granted; on that point she was quite clear. Salvatia, indeed. The gentle creature couldn't but be affronted and hurt by this.

''Oo you gettin' at, sir?' she inquired, as in duty bound when faced by familiarity.

'You—you!' gasped Jocelyn, following her into the corner she had withdrawn into, and falling at her feet.

§

Mr. Pinner was of opinion that the sooner they were married the better. There was that in Mr. Luke's eye, he told himself, which could only be got rid of by marriage; nothing but the Church could make the sentiments the young gentleman appeared to entertain for Sally right ones.

Whipt by fear, he hurried things on as eagerly as Jocelyn himself. Suppose something happened before there was time to get them married, and Mr. Luke, as he understood easily occurred with gentlemen in such circumstances, cooled off? He didn't leave them a moment alone together after that first outing in the

car when Jocelyn asked Sally to marry him, and she, obedient and wishful of pleasing everybody, besides having been talked to by her father the night before and told she had his full consent and blessing, and that it was her duty anyhow, heaven having sent Mr. Luke on purpose, had remarked amiably that she didn't mind if she did.

After this, Mr. Pinner's one aim was to keep them from being by themselves till they were safely man and wife. He lived in a fever of watchfulness. He was obsessed by terror on behalf of Sally's virginity. His days were infinitely more wearing than in the worst period of Islington. Mrs. Pinner was missed and mourned quite desperately. It almost broke his back, the hurry, the anxiety, the constant gnawing fear, and the secrecy his future son-in-law insisted on.

'What you want to be so secret for, Mr. Luke?' he asked, black suspicion, always on the alert where Sally was concerned, clouding his naturally mild and trustful eyes.

'You don't want a howling mob of undergraduates round, do you?' retorted Jocelyn.

'Goodness gracious, I should think I didn't, Mr. Luke,' said Mr. Pinner, holding up both his little hands in horror. 'She's got a reg'lar gift, that Sally 'as, for collecting crowds.'

'Well, then,' said Jocelyn irritably, whose nerves were in shreds. And added, 'Isn't it our job to keep them off her?'

'Your job now, sir—or will be soon,' said Mr. Pinner, unable to refrain from rubbing his hands at the thought of his near release from responsibility.

'I wish you wouldn't keep on calling me sir,' snapped

Jocelyn. 'I've *asked* you not to. I keep *on* asking you not to.'

He was nearly in tears with strain and fatigue. Incredibly, he hadn't once been able to kiss Sally,—not properly, not as a lover should. Always in the presence of that damned Pinner—such was the way he thought of his future father-in-law—what could he do? He couldn't even talk to her; not really talk, not pour out the molten streams of adoration that were scalding him to death while that image of alertness sat unblinking by. What was the fellow afraid of? He had asked him at first straight out, on finding how he stuck, to leave them alone, and the answer he got was that courting should be fair and above board, and that he was obliged to be both father and mother to the poor girl.

'Fair and above board! Good God,' thought Jocelyn, driving himself back at a furious pace to Cambridge and throwing back his head in a fit of wild, nervous laughter. His father-in-law—that little man with trousers so much too long for him that they corkscrewed round his legs. His father-in-law. . . .

But what was that in the way of grotesqueness compared to his being her father? There, indeed, was mystery: that loveliness beyond dreams should have sprung from Mr. Pinner's little loins.

§

The widows of Woodles, and also the virgins, were extremely curious about Jocelyn's daily visits, and tried to find out his name, and which college he belonged to. They were in no doubt as to the object of his visits, having by that time all seen Sally, and wished to warn Mr. Pinner to be careful.

They went to his shop and warned him.

Mr. Pinner, looking smaller and more sunk into his trousers than ever, thanked them profusely, and said he was being it.

'One has to be on one's guard with a motherless daughter,' they said.

Mr. Pinner said he was on it.

'And as your daughter promises to grow up some day into rather a good-looking girl——'

'There ain't much promise about Sally, mum—it's been performance, performance, *and* nothing but performance since she was so 'igh.'

'Oh, well—perhaps it's not quite as bad as that,' said the lady addressed, smiling indulgently. 'Still, I do think she may grow into a good-looking girl, and so near Cambridge you will have to be careful. Your visitor is an undergraduate, of course?'

And Mr. Pinner, afraid of Jocelyn, afraid of his threats of hordes of young men descending on the shop if the engagement were known, said, slipping on the edge of an untruth, but just managing to clear it, 'Couldn't say, mum.'

She forced him, however—the woman forced him. 'What?' she exclaimed. 'You can't say? You don't know?'

So then he told it without blinking. 'No, mum,' he said, his harassed blue eyes on her face. 'I don't think the young gentleman *did* 'appen to mention 'is name.'

And in his heart he cried out to his conscience, 'If they forces me to, 'ow, 'ow can I 'elp it?'

§

Between these two men, both in a state of extreme nervous tension, Sally passed her last days under her father's roof, amiably quiescent, completely good. She did as she was told; always she had done as she was told, and it was now a habit. She liked the look of the young man who so unexpectedly was to become her husband, and was pleased that he should be a gentleman. She knew nothing about gentlemen, but she liked the sort of sound their voices made when they talked. At Islington she had preferred the visits to the shop of the clergy for just that reason—the sound their voices made when they talked. She would have been perfectly happy during the fortnight between her first setting eyes on Jocelyn and her marriage to him, if there had been a few more smiles about.

There were none. Her father was tying her up with trembling haste, as if she were a parcel to be got rid of in a hurry. Her lover's face was haggard, and drawn in the opposite directions to those that lead to smiles. Dumbly he would gaze at her from under his overhanging brows, and every now and then burst into a brief explosion of talk she didn't understand and hadn't an idea how to deal with; or he would steal a shaking hand along the edge of the tablecloth, where her father couldn't see it, and touch her dress. He looked just like somebody in a picture, thought Sally, with his thin dark face, and eyes right far back in his head,—quite blue eyes, in spite of his dark skin and hair. She liked him very much. She liked everybody very much. If only somebody had sometimes smiled, how nice it all would have been; for then she would have known for

certain they were happy, and were getting what they wanted. Sally liked to be certain people were happy, and getting what they wanted. As it was, nobody could tell from their faces that these two were pleased. Sometimes in the evening, after her lover had gone and the door was locked and bolted and barred behind him, and all the windows had been examined and fastened securely, her father would calm down and cheer up; but her lover never calmed down or cheered up.

Sally, who hardly had what could be called thoughts but only feelings, was conscious of this without putting it into words. Perhaps when he had got what he wanted, which was, she was thoroughly aware, herself, he would be different. There were no doubts whatever in her mind as to what he wanted. She was too much used to the sort of thing. Not, it is true, in quite such a violent form, but then none of the others who had admired her—that is, every single male she had ever come across—had been allowed to be what her father called her fiancy, which was, Sally understood, the name of the person one was going to marry, and who might say things and behave in a way no one else might, as distinguished from the name of the person one went to the pictures with and didn't marry, and who was a fancy. She knew that, because, though she herself had only gone to the pictures wedged between her father and mother, she had heard the girls at school talk of going with their fancies,—those girls who had all been her friends till they began to grow up, and then all, after saying horrid things to her and crying violently, had got out of her way.

As though she could help it; as though she could help having the sort of face that made them angry.

'*I* ain't made my silly face,' she said tearfully—her delicious mouth pronounced it fice—to the last of her girl friends, to the one she was fondest of, who had hung on longest, but who couldn't, after all, stand the look that came into the eyes of him she spoke of as her boy one day that he chanced to come across Sally.

'No. No more you didn't, Sally Pinner,' furiously retorted the friend. 'But you would 'ave if you could 'ave, so you're nothin' but a nypocrite—see ? '

And the friend forgot herself still further, and added that Sally was a blinkin' nypocrite ; which was, as Mr. Pinner would have said had he heard it, language.

§

So that Sally in her short life had already caused trouble and uneasiness, in spite of having been so carefully kept out of the way.

Wherever there were human beings, those human beings stared at Sally and began to follow her ; or, if they couldn't follow her with their feet, did so with astonished, eager eyes as long as she was in sight. Holy Communion was the only one of the Sunday services Mr. Pinner let her go to in Woodles, because it was sparsely attended, and the few worshippers were women. But even at that solemn service the Vicar, who was seventy-eight, found it difficult altogether to shut out from his consciousness the lovely figure of grace shining like morning light in the shadows of his dark little church. He was as instantly aware of Sally the first Sunday she came to the service as every one else always was the moment she appeared anywhere, and she had the same effect on the old man as she had had on the young Jocelyn when first he saw her—he caught his breath,

and for a moment was near tears. Because here, the old man perceived, at the end of his life he was at last beholding beauty,—fresh from God, still dewy from its heavenly birth; and the Vicar, who had long been a recluse, and lived entirely among his memories, which all were sentimental and poetic, bowed down in spirit before the young radiance come into his church, as before the Real Presence.

§

Such was Sally when young Jocelyn married her—mild inside, and only desiring to give satisfaction, and outside a thing that seemed made up of light. As Mr. Pinner had wished to hide her, so did Jocelyn wish to hide her, and wanted to be married in London, the least conspicuous of spots; but technical difficulties prevented this, seeing that he wanted to be married quickly, so he took the Vicar into his confidence, and got a special licence, and thus avoiding banns and publicity was married early one bright March morning, while Woodles, unaware of what was happening, was still washing up its breakfast things.

By this time Jocelyn was acquainted with Sally's inability to give a plain answer to a question, and half expected her to reply 'I don't mind if I do' to the Vicar when he asked if she would take him, Jocelyn, to be her wedded husband. She didn't; but if she had he wouldn't have cared, nor would the Vicar have cared. Whatever she did, whatever she said, was to these two dazzled men the one perfect gesture, the one perfect word.

But Sally, young and shy, said very little. Hardly had she spoken during the brief courtship. To the

Vicar, full of awe of his office and his age, she scarcely dared raise her eyes, much less lift up her voice. It was enough, however; the old man was enthralled. Far from being surprised at Jocelyn's determination to take his name off the books of his college and chuck his promising career and marry Sally and go up to London to pick up his living as a journalist, a profession for which he hadn't the slightest aptitude, the Vicar understood perfectly. The college authorities, on the other hand, unaware of his reason for ruining himself, were amazed at such deliberate suicide. They had not seen Sally. The Vicar, who had, was convinced the young man was doing the one thing worth doing,—giving up everything to follow after Truth.

'For is not Truth Beauty, and Beauty Truth?' asked the Vicar, too old to bother any longer with material considerations.

Jocelyn and he were unanimous that it was.

§

The Vicar, indeed, was an immense comfort to Jocelyn the second and last week of his engagement, for Mr. Pinner was no comfort at all. Not that Jocelyn needed comfort at this marvellous moment; but he needed understanding, some one to talk to, some one who could and would listen intelligently. Mr. Pinner didn't listen intelligently; he didn't listen at all. All he did was to say heartily, 'That's right,' to everything Jocelyn said, and such indiscrimination was annoying. It was a deep refreshment to get away from him and go up to the Vicarage, and there, slowly pacing up and down with the old man on the sunny path where the first daffodils were, talk with some one who so completely understood.

The Vicar concluded, from the frequency with which his young friend came to take counsel of him, that he was an orphan, but he asked no questions because he was long past the age of questions. The age of silence was his, of quiet resting on his oars, of a last warming of himself in the light of the sun, before departing hence and being no more seen. By this time, his mind being faintly bleared, he connected Sally with the *Nunc Dimittis*, and thanked God aloud, greatly to her confusion, for she couldn't make out what the old gentleman was talking about, for being allowed to see, before departing in peace, the perfect loveliness of her whom he called the Lord's Salvatia. Fitting and right was the young man's attitude in the Vicar's eyes; fitting and right to leave all things, and follow after this child of grace.

His unpractical attitude was immensely grateful to Jocelyn, who knew, though during this strange fortnight of thwarted love-making and arm's-length worship he managed to forget, that one of the things he was leaving was his mother.

He hadn't mentioned it, but he had got one.

III

§

Not a father, for he had long been dead, but a mother, whose single joy and pride he was. There she sat at home by the fire on his wedding night, thinking of him. No complete half-hour of the day could pass without the thought of Jocelyn getting into it. Her only child; so brilliant, so serious, so hard-working, so good. She loved brains. She loved diligence. She loved the man of the house to be absorbed in his work. What a halo he was about her head! Everybody round where she lived knew about him. Everybody had heard of his successes, —'My son, who is a scholar of Ananias. . . . My son, who is a Prizeman of his University. . . . My son, who won this year's Rutherford Prize. . . .' Great was her reward for having devoted her life to him and his education, and for having turned a deaf ear to those suitors who had tried to marry her when she was a young widow. She wasn't even now, twenty years later, an old widow, but she was a widow who was less young.

She lived in one of those suburbs where much is done for the mind. She was popular in it, and looked up to. She was, in fact, one of its leading lights,—cultivated, lady-like, well-read, artistic, interested in each new movement that came along. And of a most pleasing appearance, too, being slender at an age when the

mothers of the grown-up are sometimes so no longer, dark haired among the grey, smooth among the puckered, and her eyes had no crow's feet, and were calm and beautifully clear.

She was serenely happy. The *milieu* suited her exactly. She had come to South Winch twenty years before from Kensington—real Kensington, not West or North, but the part that clusters round the Albert Hall—on her husband's death, because of having to be frugal, but soon discovered it was the very place for her. Far better, she intelligently recognised, to be a leading light in a suburb, and know and be known by everybody, than extinguished and invisible in London. Besides, spring came to the suburbs in a way it never did to London, and it was the custom in South Winch, where people were determined to think highly, to think particularly highly of spring. At the bottom of her half acre there was only an iron railing separating her from a real meadow belonging to the big villa of a prosperous City man, and spring, she told the Rector, who was also a Canon, did things in that meadow it would never dream of doing near the Albert Hall.

'Look at those dandelions,' said Mrs. Luke. 'I do think the meanest flower that blows in its natural setting is more beautiful than the whole of those thought-out effects in Kensington Gardens.'

And the Rector—the Canon—said, 'How true that is,' and remarked that she was a Wordsworthian; and Mrs. Luke smiled, and said, 'Am I?' and wasn't altogether pleased, for Wordsworth, she somehow felt, was no longer, in the newest opinion, what he was.

While Jocelyn, then, was worshipping Sally across the supper-table of the private sitting-room he had engaged

in the hotel at Exeter, where they were breaking their journey to Cornwall, which was the place he was going to hide his honeymoon in, and Sally, unable to make head or tail of his speech and behaviour, was becoming every minute more uneasy, his mother sat, placid in the security of unconsciousness, by the fire in Almond Tree Cottage, a house which used, before the era of her careful simplicity, so foolishly to be called Beulah.

'A cottage,' she observed to her sympathetic friends, 'is the proper place for me. I'm a poor woman. Five hundred a year'—why hide anything?—'doesn't go far these days after Income Tax has been deducted. Jocelyn has his own five hundred, or we would really have been in a quite bad way. As it is, I can just manage.'

And she did; and in her clever hands frugality merely seemed comfort gone a little thin, and nobody liked to ask her for subscriptions.

The house was small and very white, and had a small and very green garden, with a cedar on the back lawn and an almond tree on the front one. Two front gates that swang back on their hinges, and a half-moon carriage-sweep. Railings. Shrubs. The yellow sanded road. Houses opposite, with almond trees too, or, less prettily, in the front gardens of the insensitive, monkey puzzles. The hall door was blue. Such curtains as could be seen at the same time as the door were blue too. At no season of the year was there not at least one vivid flower stuck in a slender vessel in the sitting-room window. And in the sitting-room itself, on the otherwise bare walls, was one picture only,—a copy, really very well done, of a gay and charming Tiepolo ceiling—Mrs. Luke was the first in South Winch to take

up Tiepolo—in which everybody was delicately happy, in spite of a crucifixion going on in one corner, and high-spirited, fat little angels tossed roses across the silvery brightness of what was evidently a perfect summer afternoon. Books, too, were present; not many, but the right ones. Blake was there; also Donne; and Sir Thomas Browne; and Proust, in French. A novel, generally Galsworthy, lay on the little table near the fire, and, by an arrangement with a circle of friends, most of the better class weeklies passed through the house in a punctual stream.

Sitting in the deep chair by the fireside table on Jocelyn's wedding night, her dark head against the bright cushion that gave the necessary splash of colour to the restful bareness of the room, her lap full of reviews she was going to read of the best new books and plays, so as to be able to discuss them intelligently with him when he came home at Easter—only a few more days to wait,—his mother couldn't keep her eyes from wandering off these studies to the glowing little fire of ships' logs and neat blocks of peat, for her thoughts persisted in flying, like homing birds, to the nest they always went back to and so warmly rested in: Jocelyn, and what he was, and what he was going to be.

Other mothers had anxieties; she had never had one. Others had disappointments; she had had nothing but happy triumphs. He was retiring, it was true, and stayed up in his little attic-study when he was at home, and wouldn't go anywhere except to a Beethoven concert —together they had studied all that has been said about Beethoven, and she had plans for proceeding to the study of all that has been said about Bach—or for long tramps with her, when they would eat bread and cheese

at some wayside inn, and read aloud to each other between the mouthfuls; but how much richer was she herself for that. And the comfort of having a *good* son, a son who cared nothing for even so-called harmless dissipations! When she looked round at other people's sons, and saw the furrows on their fathers' foreheads—she smiled at her own alliterations—and heard a whisper of the dread word Debts, and knew where debts came from—betting, gambling, drinking, women, in a ghastly crescendo, how could she ever, ever be thankful enough that Jocelyn was so good? Never once had he betted, gambled, drunk, or—she smiled again at her own word—womaned; she was ready to take her oath he hadn't. Didn't she know him inside out? He kept nothing from her; he couldn't have if he had wanted to, bless him, for she, who had watched him from long before he became conscious, knew him far, far better than he could possibly know himself.

Many, indeed, were her blessings. Great and conscious her content. Her dark head on the vivid cushion was full of bright—why not say it?—self-congratulation, which is the other word for thankfulness. And how not congratulate herself on the possession of that beloved, brilliant boy? While, to add to everything else, the neighbour, whose meadow of buttercups she so freely and inexpensively enjoyed from over the railing on dappled May mornings, was showing unmistakable signs of wishing to marry her. His year of widowerhood had recently come to an end, and the very next week he had begun the kind of activity that could only be described as courting; so that she had this feather, too, to add to a cap already, she gratefully acknowledged, so full of feathers. Poor? Yes, she was poor. But

what was being poor? Nothing at all, if one refused to mind it.

A third time she smiled, shaking her head at the neat peat blocks as if they had been the neighbour. 'Come, come, my friend—at our ages,' she could hear herself saying to him with gentle and flattering raillery—he must be at least twenty years older than herself—when the moment should arrive. But it was pleasant, this, to sit in her charmingly lit room—she was clever at making lampshades—and to know that next door was a man, well set up in spite of his sixty odd years, who thought her desirable, pleasant to be certain she had only to put out her hand, and take wealth.

And who could say, she mused, but that it mightn't be the best thing for Jocelyn too, to have a solid stepfather like that at his back, able to help him financially? She had spent happy years in the little white house, and it had rarely worried her that she should be obliged to take such ceaseless pains to hide the bones of her economies gracefully, but later on she would be older, and might be tired, and later on Jocelyn might perhaps want to marry and set up house for himself—after all, it would only be natural—and then she would be lonely, besides being ten years—she thought in ten years would be about the time he might wish to marry—less attractive than she was now, and getting not only lonelier with every year but also, she supposed, less attractive; though surely one oughtn't to do that, if one's mind and spirit——?

Whereas, if she married the neighbour . . .

§

He came in at that moment, on the pretext of bringing her back a book she had lent him, though he hadn't read it and didn't mean to, for it was what he, being a plain man, called high-falutin. He didn't tell her this, because when a man is courting he cannot be candid, and he well knew that he was courting. What he wasn't sure of was whether she knew. You never could tell with women; the best of them were artful.

He came in that evening, then, to make it finally clear to her. She was a charming woman, and much younger, he imagined, than her age, which couldn't, he calculated, with a son of twenty-two be far short of forty-two, and he had always greatly admired the pluck with which she faced what seemed to him sheer destitution. She was the very woman, too, to have at the head of one's table when one had friends to dinner,—good-looking, knowing how to dress, able to talk about any mortal thing, and a perfect lady. And after the friends had gone, and it was time to go to bye-bye—such were the words his thoughts clothed themselves in,—she would still be a desirable companion, even if—again his words—a bit on the thin side. That, however, would soon be set right when he had fed her up on all the good food she hadn't ever been able to afford, and anyhow she was years and years younger than poor Annie, who had been the same age as himself, which was all right to begin with, but no sort of a show in the long run. Also, Annie had stayed common.

So the neighbour, whose name was Mr. Thorpe, arrived on Jocelyn's wedding night about nine o'clock in the restrained sitting-room of Almond Tree Cottage,

determined to make his purpose clear. That he should be refused didn't enter his head, for he had much to offer. He was far the richest man in the parish, his two daughters were married and out of the way, his house and cars were bigger than anybody's, and he grew pine-apples. He couldn't help thinking, he couldn't help knowing, that for a woman of over forty he was a catch, and he went into the room, past the reverent-eyed small maid who held the door open, expanding his chest. A poverty-stricken little room, he always considered, with nothing in it of the least account, except the lady.

Yes; except the lady. But what a lady. Not a grey hair in her head, which he had carefully examined when she wasn't looking, nor, he would wager, any tooth that wasn't exclusively her own. And a trim ankle; and a pretty wrist. Ruffles, too. He liked ruffles at a woman's wrist. And able to talk about any mortal thing. Annie, poor creature, had made him look like a fool when he had his friends to dinner. This one would be the finest of the feathers in a cap which, he too gratefully acknowledged, was stuck full of them.

'All alone, eh?' he said cheerily. 'That's bad.'

'I'm used to it,' said Mrs. Luke, smilingly holding out her slender hand, on which a single ruby—or was it a garnet? probably a garnet—caught the light. She had on a wine-coloured, soft woollen dress that Jocelyn liked, and the ring and the dress went very well together.

A pretty picture; a perfect lady. Mr. Thorpe, determined to waste no time in making his purpose clear, bent his head and kissed the hand.

'Being used to a bad thing doesn't make it better, but worse,' he said, drawing up the only other really

comfortable chair—Jocelyn's—and sitting down close to her.

And he was about to embark then and there on his proposal, for he hated waste of anything, including time, and Mrs. Luke was already drawing up her shoulders to her ears in an instinctive movement of defence, for she would have liked to have had longer to turn the thing over in her mind, and discover really whether his splendid illiteracy—it was so immense as to appear magnificent—would be a source of pleasure to her or suffering, whether the pleasure of filling up his mind's emptiness would be greater than the pains of such an exertion, whether, in short, she hadn't better refuse him, when the little maid came in with the silver salver she had been trained to present letters on, and held it out before her mistress.

'Letters, eh?' said Mr. Thorpe, nettled by this interruption. 'I should give orders they're to be left in the —well, you can't call it a hall, can you, so let's say passage.'

The little maid, alarmed, sidled out of the room.

'I would indeed, if it weren't that I can't bear to wait a minute when it's a letter from Jocelyn,' said Mrs. Luke, holding the letter tight, for she saw it was from him. 'You wouldn't be able to wait either, would you,' she went on, smiling more brightly even than usual, for the mere touch of the letter made her more bright, 'for anything you loved.'

'No,' said Mr. Thorpe sturdily, seizing this opening. 'No. I wouldn't. And that's why I've come round——'

But she didn't hear. 'You'll forgive me, won't you my dear friend,' she murmured, slitting the envelope

with an enamelled paper-knife lest she should harm the dear contents, 'but I haven't heard from that boy for over a fortnight, and I've been beginning to wonder——'

'Oh, certainly, certainly. Don't mind me,' said Mr. Thorpe, aggrieved. 'Mark my words, though,' he added, sitting up very square and broad in his chair, and giving the knees of his trousers a twitch each, 'one shouldn't overdo the son business.'

She didn't hear. Her eyes were running down the lines of the letter, while she muttered something about just wanting to see if he were well.

'Damned stuck up young prig,' Mr. Thorpe was in the act of saying to himself, resentfully watching this absorption, when he was interrupted by a complete and alarming change in the lady.

She gave a violent shudder; she dropped the letter on the floor, as though her shaking hands couldn't hold it; and then, fixing her large grey eyes on his, opened her mouth and moaned.

He stared at her. He couldn't think what was the matter.

'Sick, eh?' he asked, staring.

'Oh, *oh*——' was all she said, turning her face from him, and burying it in the cushion.

§

Well, what does one do with a woman who buries her face in a cushion? Comforts her, of course, thought Mr. Thorpe, again seizing his opportunity. The young ass couldn't be dead, or he wouldn't have written. But he might——

Mr. Thorpe paused at the thought, and withdrew the hand already put out to pat. Yes; that was it. Better

not comfort just yet. For the young fool had no doubt run into debt, and was being threatened with proceedings, and was trying to persuade his mother to pay, and Mr. Thorpe didn't want to begin his betrothal with having to shell out for somebody else's scapegrace son.

His hand, accordingly, slowly redescended on to his knee, where it rested motionless while he stared at the figure in the chair. Pretty figure. Nice lines. Graceful, even in her upset. She only needed very little, just the weeniest bit, fattening up. But she shouldn't have spoiled that son. Women were fools about their sons.

Then, noticing that the letter was lying at his feet, and the lady, her face in the cushion, was incapable of observing what he did, he put on his eyeglasses, picked it up carefully so that it shouldn't rustle, and, remarking to himself that all was fair in love and war, read it.

Having read it, he as carefully replaced it on the carpet, took off his eyeglasses, and began to comfort.

For it wasn't debts, it was marriage; the best thing possible from Mr. Thorpe's point of view—clearing the field, leaving the mother free to turn her thoughts to other ties. And a good job too, for the young ass had gone clean off his head. What a letter. He ought to be ashamed of himself, writing sick stuff like that to his mother. Married this very day. Given up Cambridge. Chucked his career. Finished with ambitions. Going to earn his own living in London. Mother bound to love—no, it was put hotter than that—worship the girl, who was more beautiful than any angel——

Tut, tut. Silly young ass, caught by the first handsome slut.

'Better tell me about it,' said Mr. Thorpe, leaning forward and laying his hand with unhesitating kindness

on Mrs. Luke's shoulder. 'Nothing like getting things off one's chest. Count on me. Whatever your son's done I'll help. I'll do anything—anything at all, mind you, to help.'

And Jocelyn's mother, completely overwhelmed by the incredible sudden smash up of everything she had lived for, did, on hearing this kind, steady male voice through her misery, turn to Mr. Thorpe as the drowning turn to any spar, and, making odd little noises, stooped down and tried to pick up the letter.

But her hands shook too much. He had to pick it up for her.

'Read it——,' she said in a sobbing whisper.

So he took out his eyeglasses, and read it again.

§

'Now what you've got to do,' said Mr. Thorpe, folding it up neatly when he had finished, and laying it down on the little table, 'is to make up your mind that what's done can't be undone.'

Mrs. Luke, her head buried in the cushions, moaned.

'That's it,' said Mr. Thorpe, a hand on each knee and an eye on her. 'That's the ticket.'

'I know—I know,' moaned Mrs. Luke. 'But just at first—the shock——'

'Shock, eh? I don't know that there's much shock about marriage,' said Mr. Thorpe. 'Shouldn't be, anyhow.'

'But so sudden—so unexpected——'

'People will marry, you know,' said Mr. Thorpe. 'Especially men. Once they get set on it, nothing stops 'em.'

'I know—I know—but Jocelyn—such a boy——'

'Boy, eh? Age has precious little to do with it,' said Mr. Thorpe firmly. 'In fact, nothing.'

'But his prospects—his career—all thrown away—ruined——'

'Marriage never harmed a man yet,' said Mr. Thorpe still more firmly, aware that he was being inaccurate, but also aware that no one can afford to be accurate and court simultaneously. Accuracy, Mr. Thorpe knew, comes after marriage, not before.

'Mark my words,' he went on, 'that clever son of yours won't stop being clever because he's married. Who's going to take his brains from him? Not a loving wife, you bet. Why, a good wife, a loving wife, doubles and trebles a man's output.'

'How kind you are,' murmured Mrs. Luke, who did find this comforting. 'But Jocelyn—my boy—to keep it from me——'

'Bound to keep something from his mother,' said Mr. Thorpe. 'Mothers are all right, and a man has to have them to start with, but the day comes when a back seat is what they've got to climb into. Only as regards their children, mind you,' he added. 'A woman has many other strings to her bow, and is by no means nothing but a mother.'

'Oh, but we were everything, everything to each other,' moaned Mrs. Luke, stabbed afresh by the mention of a back seat. 'Always, always. He never *looked* at another woman——'

'Damned prig,' thought Mr. Thorpe. And said out aloud, 'Time he began, then. Though having a woman like you about,' he added, placing his hand with determination on hers, which hung limply down holding a handkerchief while her face was still turned away, 'ought

to keep him from seeing the others all right. You're a wonderful woman, you know—a remarkable woman.'

His voice changed. It took on the unmistakable note that is immediately followed by love-making.

'I—think I'll go and lie down,' said Mrs. Luke faintly, recognising the note, and feeling she could bear no more of anything that night. 'I—I really think I must. My head——'

She struggled to get up.

He helped her. He helped her by laying hold of both her wrists, and drawing her upwards and towards him.

'Head, eh?' he said, a gleam in his eyes.

'How kind, how kind——' she murmured distractedly, finding herself on her feet and very close to Mr. Thorpe, who still held her wrists.

She wanted her letter. She looked about helplessly for her letter, keeping her head as far away from him as she could. There was her letter—on the table—she wanted to snatch it up—to get away as quickly as possible—to hide in her bedroom—and her wrists were being held, and she couldn't move.

'Kind, eh? Kind, you call it?' said Mr. Thorpe through his teeth. 'I can be kinder than that.' And he put his arms round her, and drew her vigorously to his chest.

'This in exchange for Jocelyn,' drifted through Mrs. Luke's wretched and resisting mind.

But, even through her wretchedness and resistance she felt there was something rock-like, something solid and fixed, about Mr. Thorpe's chest, to which in the present catastrophe, with the swirling waters of bitterest disappointment raging round her feet, it might be well to cling.

IV

§

And while these things were happening in Almond Tree Cottage, Jocelyn, in the private sitting-room of the Exeter hotel, was behaving, it seemed to Sally, in the most strange way.

If this was what married gentlemen were like, then she wondered that there should be any married ladies left. Enough to kill them off like flies, thought Sally, helplessly involved in frequent and alarming embraces. Still, she held on hard in her mind to what her father had said to her the evening before, when she was going up to bed,—' Sally,' her father had said, calling her back a moment and looking solemn, ' don't you take no notice of what Mr. Luke do or don't, once 'e's your 'usband. 'Usbands ain't gentlemen, remember—not ordinary, day-time gentlemen, such as you thinks they are till you knows better. And you just say to yourself as 'ow your mother went through it all before you was so much as born, and she was a bit of all right, warn't she ? So you just remember that, my girl, if by any chance you should 'appen to get the fidgets.'

She did remember it, though it was Mr. Luke—so she thought of him—who had the fidgets. He didn't seem able to sit quiet for two minutes in his chair, and eat his supper, and let her eat hers. Such a lovely

supper, too—a real shame to let it get cold. What was the good of ordering a lovely supper if one wasn't going to eat it properly ?

More and more earnestly as the evening progressed did she wish herself back in the peaceful parlour behind the shop ; less and less did the thought of her mother having been through all this too support her, because she became surer every minute that she hadn't been through it. Never in his life could her father have behaved as Mr. Luke was behaving. Entirely unused to kisses, except evenings and mornings, and then just one on her cheek and over and done with at once, Sally couldn't get over the number and length of Mr. Luke's. Also, it surprised her very much to see a gentleman interrupt his supper—and such a lovely supper—to run round the table and go down on his knees and kiss her shoes,—new ones, of course, but still not things that ought to be kissed ; it surprised her so much, that she came over quite queer each time.

She thought it a great mercy he had locked the door, so that the grand waiter couldn't get in, for the grand waiter, staring at her while he handed her the dishes and calling her Madam, alarmed her in his way very nearly as much as Mr. Luke alarmed her in his ; yet, on the other hand, if the waiter was locked out she was locked in, so that it cut both ways, thought Sally, wishing she might be let eat the meringue the waiter had left on her plate before being locked out. But every time she tried to, Mr. Luke seemed to have to be kissed.

And the way Mr. Luke, when he did stay still a minute in his chair, never took his eyes off her, and the things he said ! And he didn't seem a bit happy either, in spite of talking such a lot about heaven and the angels.

If only he had seemed happy Sally wouldn't have minded so much, for then at least somebody would have been getting some good out of it; but he looked all upset, and as if he were going to be ill,—sickening for something, she concluded.

For a long time she kept up her manners, bravely clinging to them and trying hard to guess when was the right moment to say Yes and when to say No, which was very difficult because he talked so queerly, and she hadn't an idea what most of it meant; for a long time she was able to smile politely, if anxiously, every time she looked up and caught his fierce and burning eye; but all of a sudden, perpetually thwarted in her efforts to eat the meringue, and very hot and uncomfortable from so much kissing, she found she couldn't do anything any more that was proper, wasn't able to smile, said No when it ought to have been Yes, lost her nerve, and to her own surprise and excessive shame began to whimper.

Very quietly she whimpered, very beautifully, her head drooping exquisitely on its adorable little neck, while the meringue she had so badly wanted to be allowed to eat for the last quarter of an hour was finally renounced, and left to waste and dribble away its expensive cream on her plate.

Jocelyn was appalled.

'Oh, Sally—oh, my angel—oh, my heavenly, heavenly child!' he cried, flinging himself once again at her feet, while she once again quickly drew them up beneath her frock, as she had done each time before.

She apologised humbly. She was really terribly ashamed,—and he so good to her, spending all that money on such a splendid supper.

'I ain't cried but once before in my life,' she explained, fumbling for her handkerchief, while the tears welled up in her enchanting sweet eyes. 'When mother died, that was, but I never didn't not else. Dunno what come over me, Mr. Luke——'

'Only once before! When your mother died! And now on your wedding day! Oh, Sally—it's me—I've made you—I, who would die a thousand deaths to spare a single perfect hair of your divine little head——'

'Don't say that, Mr. Luke—please now, don't say that,' Sally earnestly begged, much perturbed by this perpetual harping on death and angels. And having at last got out her handkerchief, she was just going to wipe her eyes decently when he snatched it from her and didn't let her do anything, but actually kissed away the tears as they rolled out.

'You ain't 'alf fond of kissin', are you, Mr. Luke,' murmured Sally miserably, helplessly obliged to hand over her tears to what seemed to her a really horrid fate, while to herself she was saying in resigned, unhappy astonishment, 'And them my very own eyes, too, when all's said and done.'

§

It was three days later that Jocelyn, for the first time, said, 'Don't say that, Sally,' in a tone of command.

He had told her many times not to call him Mr. Luke, told her entreatingly, caressingly, playfully, that he was her husband Jocelyn, and no longer ever any more to be Mr. anything on her darling lips; and when she forgot, for habits in Sally died hard, smilingly and adoringly reminded her.

But this time, after three whole days' honeymoon and

three whole nights, he commanded; adding in a tone of real annoyance, 'And for God's sake don't look at people when they pass.'

'I ain't lookin' at them,' protested Sally, flushing, who never wanted to look at anybody, besides having been taught by the anxious Pinners that no modest girl did. 'They looks at me.'

It was true. Jocelyn knew it was true, but nevertheless was angry, and caught hold of her arm and marched her up a side lane from the sea, up to the less inhabited hill at the back of the village.

For they were at St. Mawes, the little cut-off fishing village in South Cornwall which had lived in Jocelyn's memory ever since, two years before, on an Easter bicycling tour with his mother, he and she had suddenly dropped down on it from the hill above, unaware of its existence till they were right on it, so completely was it tucked away and hidden. It had lived in his memory as the most difficult spot to get at, and therefore probably the most solitary, of any he had come across. Miles from a railway, miles from the nearest town, only to be reached, unless one went to it by sea, along a most difficult and tortuous road that ended by throwing one down a precipice on to a ferry-boat which took one across the Fal and shot one out at the foot of another precipice,—or so the two hills seemed to Jocelyn and his mother, who had to push their bicycles up them—he considered it the place of places to hide his honeymoon in; to hide, that is, the precious and conspicuous Sally.

His recollection of it was just a village street along the sea, an inn or two, a shop or two, a fisherman or two, and in the middle of the day complete emptiness.

The very place.

He wrote, trembling with excitement, to its post office to get him rooms, rooms for his wife and himself —his wife; oh, my God! thought Jocelyn, still a week off his wedding day.

The post office got him rooms,—a tiny bedroom, almost filled by the bed, a tiny parlour, almost filled by the table, and a fisherman and his wife, who lived in the rest of the cottage, to look after them.

The first day they were out in a boat all day being shown coves by the fisherman, who stared hard at Sally, and whenever they wanted to go back took them to see another cove instead; but the second day, the imperativeness of daily exercise having been part of Jocelyn's early training, he felt it his duty to exercise Sally, and emerged with her during the quiet hour after their mid-day meal for a blow along the sea front.

She had already said, when he asked her if she would like to go out, that she didn't mind if she did, and he had passed it over because he happened to be looking at her when she said it, and no one who happened to be looking at Sally when she said anything was able to pay much attention to her words. Jocelyn couldn't, anyhow, only three days married; but out on the sea front, walking side by side, his eyes fixed ahead in growing surprise at the number of people suddenly come out, like themselves, apparently, for blows, when in answer to his remark that the place seemed more populous than he had imagined, she said, 'It do, don't it, Mr. Luke,' he snapped at her.

Snapped at her. Snapped at his angel, his child of light, his being from another sphere, who ought, he had told her, making her fidget a good deal, for whatever did he mean? sit for ever on a sapphire throne, and be

crowned by stars, and addressed only in the language of Beethoven's symphonies. But then there were these confounded people suddenly sprung from nowhere, and it was enough to make any man snap, the way they looked at Sally. Where did they come from? Where were they going? What did they want?

Jocelyn seized her, and hurried her up the side path that led over the hill to the quiet country at the back. He was excessively put out. The swine — the idle, ogling swine, he thought, rushing her up the steep path at such a rate that the willing Sally, obediently putting her best leg foremost, nevertheless, light and active as she was, arrived at the top so breathless that she couldn't speak.

Not that she wanted to speak. Never much of a hand at what her girl friends, when she still had them, used to call back-chat, the brief period of her honeymoon had taught her how safe and snug silence was compared to the draughty dangers of speech. Marriage, she already felt, groping dimly about in it, wasn't at all like anything one was used to. It seemed swampy underfoot. You started walking along it, and it looked all right, when in you went. Husbands—difficult to know where one was with *them*, thought Sally. They changed about so. One moment on their knees as if one was a church, and the next rushing one off one's feet up a hill such as one couldn't have believed possible if one hadn't seen it for oneself, and their face all angry. Angry? What for? wondered Sally, who was never angry.

'It's that hair of yours,' said Jocelyn, got to the top, and standing still a moment, for he too was panting.

She looked at him uncomprehendingly, in a lovely surprise. He was frowning at the sea, and the bit of road along it visible at their feet, on which still crawled a few black specks.

'Ow?' Sally was injudicious enough to ask; but after all it was only one word—she was careful to say only one word.

One was enough, though.

'How, Sally—*how*, HOW. You really *must* learn to say *how*,' said Jocelyn, exasperated.

'I did say 'ow,' explained Sally meekly.

'Yes. You did. Exactly,' said Jocelyn.

'Ain't it right to say 'ow?' she asked, anxious for instruction.

'Haven't you *any* ear?' was Jocelyn's answer, turning to her with a kind of pounce.

Sally was still more surprised. What a question. Of course she had an ear. Two of them. And she was going to tell him so when his face, as he looked at her, changed to the one he had when he got talking about heaven and angels.

For how could Jocelyn stay irritated with anything like that? He had only to turn and look at her for all his silly anger to shrivel up. In the presence of her loveliness, what a mere mincing worm he was, with his precise ways of speech, and his twopenny-halfpenny little bit of superior education. As though it mattered, as though it mattered, thought Jocelyn.

'Oh, Sally, I didn't mean it,' he said, catching up her hand and kissing it, which made her feel very awkward and ashamed, somehow, having a thing like that done to her hand, and in broad daylight, too, and out of doors. 'But you should try and tuck your hair more out of

sight—look, this way,' he went on, gently taking her hat off and arranging her hair for her before putting it on again. 'You see,' he explained, 'it does catch the eye so, doesn't it, my beautiful, flaming seraphim—oh, my God,' he added under his breath, 'how beautiful you are!'

'It don't make no difference,' said Sally in a resigned voice.

'What doesn't?'

'If you tucks it in or don't. They always looks at me. We tried everything at 'ome, Father and Mother did, but they always looks at me.'

She spoke with deprecation and apology. Best let him know the worst at once, for she was thoroughly aware of her disabilities and the endless trouble she had given her parents; while as for their scoldings, and exhortations, and dark hints of bad things that might happen to her, hadn't they rung in her ears since she was twelve? But what could she do? There she was. Having been born like that, how could she help it?

And another thing she couldn't help, though she was unconscious that she did it, was that every time she caught the amiable eye of a stranger, and she had never yet met any stranger who hadn't amiable eyes, she smiled. Just a little; just an involuntary gratitude for the friendliness in the eye that had been caught. And as she had two dimples, otherwise invisible, the smile, which would anyhow have been lovely on that face, was of exceeding loveliness, and complications followed, and angry chidings from the worn-out Pinners, and, in Sally, a resigned surprise.

It was while she was trying to convey to Jocelyn that whatever he did with her hair she was doomed to be

looked at, and was at the same time shaking it back so as to help him to get it neat—it looked startlingly vivid against the grey background of sea and sky—that a young man called Carruthers, out for a run with his dog after a stuffy Sunday family lunch, came round the bend of the path, whistling and swinging his stick, and stopped dead when he saw her.

His dog rushed on, however, and ran up to the spirit-thing, and sniffed and wagged round it, and seemed quite pleased; so it was real, it wasn't a spirit, it wasn't the beginning in his own brain of hallucinations on burning, Blake-like lines.

He stood gazing. He had never seen anything like that before,—no, by Jove, nor had most other people. 'Oh, I say—don't, don't, *don't* put it on yet!' he nearly cried out as he saw the hat in the dark, Iberian-looking youth's hands being raised quickly above the girl's head when that confounded dog disturbed them, and knew that in another instant it would descend and the light go out.

The Iberian's movements, however, were swift and decided, and the hat was not only put on but pulled on, —tugged on with vigour as far down over her eyes as it would go; and then, after a frowning glance round, the fellow drew her hand through his arm and walked her off quickly in the opposite direction.

There was nothing left for Carruthers but to call his dog—an attractive bitch, who would have been a Sealyham if it hadn't been for something its mother did once,—and it wasn't Carruthers' fault that it too should chance to be called Sally.

'Sally! Sally!' he therefore very naturally shouted, raising his voice as much as possible, which was a great

deal. 'Sally! Come here! Sally! Come *here*, I tell you!'

The hills round St. Mawes reverberated with entreaties that Sally should come.

She did come, his Sally did, but behind it, running, came the Iberian as well. The girl was out of sight round the corner. Young Carruthers watched the hurrying approach of her companion with surprise, which increased when he saw the expression on his face.

'How dare you! How dare you!' shouted Jocelyn directly he was near enough; upon which Carruthers' surprise became amazement.

'What's up?' he inquired.

'How dare you call out Sally, and tell her to come here? Eh? What do you mean by it? You——'

'I say—hold on,' exclaimed Carruthers quickly, raising a defensive arm. 'Hold on a bit. Look—here she is, here's Sally——' and he pointed to the fawning sinner.

Jocelyn's fists fell limply to his sides. He flushed, and looked extremely foolish. 'I'm sorry,' he muttered.

'Don't mention it,' said Carruthers, with immense sarcastic politeness.

'It—it's my wife's name,' stammered Jocelyn, 'and I thought you knew her, and were incredibly cheeking her——'

Carruthers, staring at his nervous twitching face, didn't laugh, but simply nodded. Having seen Sally he simply nodded.

'That's all right,' he said gravely; and for some reason added impulsively, 'old man.'

He watched the thin figure hurrying off again. 'A bit of responsibility,' he thought. 'The poor chap looks

all nerves and funk already——' for it was plain they couldn't have been married long, plain they were both too young to have been anything long.

Carruthers, who was as solid and matter-of-fact outside as he wasn't inside, turned away so as not again to interrupt, and went home across the fields whistling sad tunes in minor keys. Marvellous beyond imagining to be married to beauty like that, but—yes, by God, one would be on wires the whole time, there'd be no end to one's anxieties. And his final conclusion was that Jocelyn was a poor devil.

§

He might have concluded it even more emphatically if he could have followed him, and seen what he saw when he got round the corner where Sally had been left for a moment—only for a moment, mind you, said Jocelyn to himself indignantly,—and found her the centre of an absorbed group.

She was smiling at two men and a woman, who were smiling and talking to her with every appearance of profound and eager interest. She was, in fact, being polite ; a habit against which Mr. Pinner had repeatedly warned her, but, for the reason that it wasn't a habit at all but her natural inability not to return smiles for smiles, had warned her in vain.

These people, climbing up the hill on its other side and finding her standing there alone, had asked her, their faces wreathed in smiles and their eyes wide with astonishment and delight, the way ; and she had only politely told them she was a stranger in those parts, and they were only asking her a few kindly questions, to which she had only answered, ' 'Ere on my 'oneymoon,'

and they were only expressing hopes that she would have a good time, when Jocelyn descended, swift, lean and vengeful, on the otherwise harmonious group.

'Yes?' said Jocelyn, scowling round at them. 'Yes?'

'My 'usband,' introduced Sally, with a gesture of all-including friendliness.

But it was no use her being friendly. Jocelyn was rude. How not be rude, with those two men standing there staring as if their eyes would bulge right out?

'I was under the impression,' he said, glaring at them up and down, from the top of their badly hatted heads, along their under-exercised and over-coated bodies to their unsatisfactory feet, 'that it was possible in England to leave a lady alone for two minutes without her being subject to annoyance.'

'I'm sure——' began the woman of the party, turning very red, while the men looked both scared and sheepish.

'Don't mind *'im*,' said Sally sweetly, desirous of mollifying.

'On the contrary, I assure you that you had much better—much better,' declared Jocelyn truculently. And again he pulled Sally's hand through his arm, and again he hurried her off.

'Really,' he said, when they were out of sight, and only green fields, empty of everything but cows, were visible. 'Really.'

He stopped and wiped his forehead.

''Ot?' ventured Sally, timid but sympathetic.

'To think that I can't leave you alone a minute!' he cried.

'They ask me the way,' Sally explained.

'Quite,' said Jocelyn. 'Quite. And what did you say, might I inquire?'

'Said as 'ow I didn't know it.'

'Quite,' said Jocelyn. 'Quite.'

'Bein', as one might say, a stranger in these parts,' Sally explained still further, for these repeated quites upset her into speech.

'Quite,' said Jocelyn. 'Quite.'

'Now don't say that, Mr. Luke—please don't, now,' she begged.

'Perhaps you, on your part, won't say Mr. Luke,' said Jocelyn. 'Not quite so often. Not more than a dozen times a day, for instance.'

Sally was silent. She mustn't think of him as Mr. Luke, she couldn't think of him by his outlandish other name, so she thought of him as Husband. 'Usband's cross,' she thought; and withdrew into a prudent dumbness.

He ended by scrambling her through the hedge, and across a field as far from the path as possible; and, sitting her down with her back to everything except another hedge, tried to tell her a few things of a necessary but minatory nature.

'Sally,' he began, lying down on the grass beside her and taking her hand in his, 'you know, don't you, that I love you?'

Sally, cautiously coming out of her silence for a moment, as one who puts a toe into cold water and instantly draws it back again, said, 'Yes, Mr.——' stopping herself just in time, and hastily amending, 'What I means is, yes.'

'And you know, don't you, that my one thought is for you and your happiness?'

Yes, she supposed she knew that, thought Sally, fidgeting uneasily, for though the voice and manner were the voice and manner of Mr. Luke there was somehow a smack about them that reminded her of her father when he was going to do what was known in the family as learning her.

'Don't you?' insisted Jocelyn, as she said nothing. 'Don't you?'

He looked up into her face in search of an answer, and his voice faltered, he forgot completely what he was going to say, and whispering 'Oh, I *worship* you!' began kissing the hand he held, covering it with kisses, and seizing the other one and covering it with kisses too, while his ears, she could see, for his head lay in her lap, went crimson.

And Sally, who had already discovered that when Jocelyn's ears turned crimson he did nothing but kiss her and murmur words that were not, however incomprehensible, anyhow angry ones, knew that for this time she was being let off.

V

§

He kept her indoors for the rest of the day, and decided that in future they would use the car as a means of getting well out of reach of St. Mawes, and then, leaving it in some obscure village, take the necessary exercise undisturbed. The boat would have done for getting away in, but the fisherman wouldn't let them have it without him, and he too stared persistently at Sally. His ridiculous name was Cupp. 'Serve him right,' thought Jocelyn, who disliked him intensely.

These difficulties considerably interfered with the peace of the honeymoon. Having to take precautions, and scheme before doing ordinary things such as go out for a walk, seemed perfectly monstrous to Jocelyn. He was inclined, though he struggled against it, to blame Sally. He knew it was grossly unfair to blame her, but then it was outside his theories that a modest woman, however lovely, shouldn't be able in England to proceed on her lawful occasions unmolested. There must be, he thought, something in Sally's behaviour, though he couldn't quite see what.

He took her away the next morning for the whole day in the car, and, leaving it at a lonely wayside inn, marched her off for the exercise they both needed. He needed it, he knew, for he was getting quite livery, and

so, he dared say, was she; though it would have been as easy to imagine a new-born flower having a liver as Sally. Anyhow, she must be exercised; her health was now his concern, Jocelyn told himself. Everything of hers was now his concern. The lovely child had been miraculously handed over to him by Destiny—thus augustly did he dub Mr. Pinner—and there was no one but him to protect and guide and teach her. No one but him jolly well should, either, said Jocelyn to himself, baring his teeth at the mere thought, savagely possessive, strongly resembling a growling dog over a newly-acquired bone.

But it was trying, having to hide her like this. It came to that, that he had to hide her if he was to have any peace. Well, when he took her to London, and settled down there seriously, there wouldn't be this trouble, because he intended to live in the slums. Slums were the places, he felt sure, for being let alone in. Not, of course, the more cut-throat kind, but obscure streets where everybody was too busy being poor to be interested in a girl's beauty. To be interested in that, Jocelyn thought he knew, you have to have had and be going to have a properly filling dinner every day. No dinners, no love. One only had to think a little to see this must be so. In such a street, how peaceful they would be, he in one room writing, she in another room not writing. Nor would there be any servant difficulty for them either, because Sally was used to housework, and knew no other conditions than those in which she had to do it herself. He and she were going to lead simple lives, irradiated by her enchanting loveliness; and presently, when she had begun to profit by the lessons he would give her in the art of correct speech,

she would be more of a companion to him, more able to—well, converse.

For the moment, he couldn't disguise from himself, she was weak in conversation. To look at her, to look at her strangely noble little head, with everything there that is supposed to go with mind—the broad sweep of the brow, the beautifully moulded temples, the radiance in the eyes, the light that seemed to play over the vivid face with its swiftly changing expressions, each one more lovely than the last, and the whole amazing creature a poem of delicate colouring, except where colour had caught fire and become the flaming wonder of her hair—to look at this, and then hear the meagre, the really most meagre and defective observations that came out of it all, was a surprise. A growing surprise. Frankly, a growingly painful surprise. Somehow he hadn't noticed it before, but now he every hour more plainly perceived a grave discrepancy between Sally's appearance and her reality. Or was what he saw her reality, and what he heard mere appearance ?

At night he was sure this was so. Next morning he was afraid it wasn't. In any case, she didn't match.

§

Curious, thought Jocelyn a day or two later, how completely Sally didn't match. Perhaps he was getting livery, and beholding her with a jaundiced eye. It wouldn't be surprising if this were so, seeing the reversal of his ordinary habits that marriage had made. His life till then had been one of excessive intellectual activity, and excessive sexual inactivity. Now it was just the opposite. It seemed to him that he was living entirely on his emotions and his nerves, doing nothing

but make love, and never thinking a single thought worth thinking. This preoccupation with Sally's discrepances, for instance—what, after all, were a girl's discrepances compared to the importance, the interest, of his brain work till he met her ?

He would come down to breakfast, to the sober facts of bacon and grey morning light, in a highly critical mood, feeling very old, and wise, and mature, and of course—there could be no two opinions as to that—in everything, except just physical beauty, Sally's superior. Then she would come down, and, cautiously saying nothing, smile at him ; and he would be forced, in spite of himself, to wonder, as he gazed at her in a fresh surprise, whether there could be anything in the world superior to such beauty. Not himself, anyhow, he thought, with his little inky ambitions, his desire to express and impress himself, his craving to find out and do. Sally had no cravings that he could discover ; she was mere lovely acquiescence, content—and with what exquisiteness—to be.

Still, in this world one couldn't just sit silent, and serene, and wonderful ; and the minute circumstances obliged her to say something her discrepances worried him again. It really was surprising : pure perfection outside, and inside—he hated to think it, but more and more feared he recognised — pure Pinner. He must take her in hand. He must teach her, train her in the manners expected in her new sphere of life.

He pulled himself together, and took her in hand. During the second week after their marriage she was, as it were, almost constantly in hand ; and towards its end Jocelyn's consciousness of his responsibility and duty, which at first had faded away in the evening and

disappeared entirely at night, stretched further and further across the day like a lengthening shadow, till at last it reached right into his very bed. The image of his mother had begun to loom nearer,—his mother, whom he had forgotten in the first fever of passion, but to whom he would undoubtedly soon now have to show Sally. Show her? Nothing so easy and sure of its effect as showing Sally, but it was what would happen immediately after she had been shown that Jocelyn, daily more able to contemplate Sally objectively as his honeymoon grew longer, began to consider.

There was no time to lose. He took her in hand. He started by attacking her h's, whose absence had early become acutely distressing to him. Every day he devoted an hour the first thing after breakfast to them, making her talk to him, to her regret, for she by then well knew that little good came of talk, and patiently, each time she dropped one, picking it up and handing it back to her, so to speak, with careful marginal comments.

He found her most obtuse. Ordinary talk wasn't enough. He had to invent sentences, special sentences for her to learn by heart and practise on, with little pitfalls in their middles which she was to avoid.

She seemed incapable of avoiding anything. Into each pitfall Sally invariably fell; and unwilling to believe that she couldn't keep out of them if she really tried, Jocelyn said the sentences over and over again to her, obstinately persevering, determined she should learn.

Hefty Harry hurries after his hat. Sally drew in long breaths, and blew them out again at the beginning of each word, hoping they would turn into h's, though for

the life of her she couldn't see any difference between the way she rendered *Hefty Harry* and the way Jocelyn did.

Husbands inhabit heaven. This was another one, worse than *Hefty Harry*, because it wasn't enough to blow out her breath at the beginning of each word, but she had somehow to get it out in the middle of the middle one as well; besides, husbands didn't inhabit heaven till they were dead, and Jocelyn's habit of harping on heaven upset her, for heaven meant death first, and ever since her mother's death, at which Sally had been present, she had had the poorest opinion of the whole thing.

During the lesson Jocelyn carefully gazed out of the window, keeping his eyes off her, because this was serious, this was important, and mustn't be interfered with by her face. There he sat, patient but determined, holding her hand so as to reassure her, saying the sentences slowly and distinctly, while Sally, moist with effort, diligently blew. Why was it so important? she vaguely wondered. He seemed to love her a lot, especially in the evenings, and kept on telling her at the times when his ears were red how happy he was, so what more did he want? What was the use of bothering over things like h's, which he declared were there but of which she could see no sign? She and her father, they had never worried about them, and they had got along all right. But Sally was docile; Sally was obedient and good-natured; Sally earnestly wished to give people what they wanted; and if what Husband wanted was h's, then she would try her utmost to provide them. If only she were quite clear as to what they were! Perhaps, by plodding, she would some day discover.

She plodded; and the nearest she got to criticism of

this new development in her life was occasionally, when after breakfast Jocelyn called her over to the window, where he had placed two chairs in readiness for the lesson and pulled down the blind below the level of her head, occasionally, very occasionally, to murmur to herself, 'Them h's.'

§

But it wasn't only her h's, it wasn't only the way she pronounced the few words that seemed to be at her disposal; there were other things that disquieted Jocelyn, as he awoke more and more from the wild first worship of her beauty. He appeared to be surrounded, out of doors and in, by an increasing number of difficulties. There was that business of not being able to go out without becoming the instant centre of the entire attention of St. Mawes,—most painful to Jocelyn, who had a fixed notion, implanted in him early in the decent cover of Almond Tree Cottage, that the truly well-bred were never conspicuous. How unpleasant, how extraordinarily unpleasant when, the morning lesson over and the need for exercise imperative, he went round to the garage to fetch the car, to find on his return the sea-wall opposite their lodgings black with expectant loungers; how unpleasant, how extraordinarily unpleasant to have to hurry Sally into the thing, as if she were the centre figure of a *cause célèbre* leaving the Law Courts; and the car, being an old one bought second-hand, sometimes wouldn't start—twice that happened—and then to see how those loungers sprang into life and flocked across to help! Jocelyn, used only to quiet comings and goings and no one taking the least notice of anything he did, used, in fact to being what

his mother described as well-bred, felt as if he had suddenly turned into a circus.

And indoors, too, he had difficulties, apart from and in addition to the difficulties at the lessons, for Sally showed a tendency, mild but unmistakable, to coalesce with the Cupps. She wanted to help Mrs. Cupp make the bed in the morning, she tried to clear away the breakfast, so as to save her feet, as she put it, and once, on some excuse or other, she actually left Jocelyn by himself in the parlour and got away into the kitchen, where he found her presently, on going to look, kissing a fat and hideous child that could only be a little Cupp.

To do her justice Mrs. Cupp in no way that Jocelyn could see encouraged this ; on the contrary, she seemed a particularly stand-offish sort of woman, who not only knew her own place but knew Sally's as well, and wished to keep her in it. Unfortunate that Sally should be, apparently, so entirely without that knowledge.

Jocelyn did his best to impart it. ' You belong to me now, Sally,' he explained, ' and my place and sphere is your place and sphere, and my relations and friends your relations and friends. I don't go and sit in kitchens, nor am I friends, beyond what every one is in regard to that class, with the Cupps. I don't, and therefore you mustn't.'

Was this speech snobbish ? He hoped not ; he trusted not. He despised snobbishness. His mother had most carefully taught him to. She would shudder at the mere word, and the shudder had got into his childhood's bones.

Sally gave herself great pains to understand, looking at him attentively while he spoke and coming to the conclusion that what Usband was driving at was that

she had got to sit quiet and remember she was now a lady. She sat quiet, remembering it. She made no attempt at any further budging from her place, even when Mrs. Cupp dropped things off the overloaded tray at her very feet, and her fingers itched to pick them up. She managed not to; she managed to take no notice whatever of them, and, bending her head over the paper Jocelyn had written her lesson out on in a fair round hand, would bury herself in it instead, saying it out loud as he had bidden her, conning it diligently.

The room re-echoed with *Hefty Harry*, and the deep preliminary drawings in and blowings out of breaths that were meant to become h's, and never did.

VI

§

It was impossible for young Carruthers, having been vouchsafed a vision of Sally, to stop himself from trying to have another. He was drawn as by a magnet. His walks, after that Sunday, took him daily down to St. Mawes, where, having briskly gone the length of the front swinging his stick, he would lean awhile—as long as he dared without becoming conspicuous—against the sea-wall, smoking and ostensibly considering the horizon, but really missing nobody who came or went along the road. The Sealyham Sally was left at home, but other dogs were brought because they are such wonderful introducers, and the road to acquaintanceship, young Carruthers knew, is paved with good dogs.

He wasn't sure that any profit would come of it if he did see the honeymooners and get into conversation, —probably not; but he couldn't help it; he had to try; he was drawn. And very soon he discovered which house they were staying in, because the other loungers, smoking and gazing out to sea, rare figures at ordinary times and scattered sparsely over a quarter of a mile, were now considerably increased in numbers, and thickened into a knot at one particular point. That point, Carruthers unhesitatingly concluded, was where she lived.

Unwilling to be seen doing this sort of thing, he held himself aloof from the knot, smoking his pipe at a decent distance; but none the less nothing escaped him that happened at the windows or the door of the little house. The house, he knew, for his family had lived in the neighbourhood for many years, was the house of the fisherman Cupp. And he thought, thrice happy Cupp, and three times thrice happy Mrs. Cupp,—for she would be constantly in and out of the very room, and be able to look at—no, he wouldn't, he couldn't say Sally, not with his own four-legged Sally so grotesquely profaning the name.

He was all wrong, however, about the Cupps. They were not at all happy; at least, Mrs. Cupp wasn't, and unless Mrs. Cupp was happy Cupp, though he only dimly apprehended this truth and explained the fact of his discomfort in many ways that were not the right ones, couldn't be happy either. For Mrs. Cupp, who beheld Sally with astonishment on her first appearance, no one in the least like that ever yet having been seen in St. Mawes, quickly began to have doubts as to whether her lodgers were married. Everybody in St. Mawes was married, except those who were going to be or had been, and it disturbed Mrs. Cupp terribly, who all her life had held her head high and looked people in the face, to think she was perhaps harbouring and cooking for a person who was neither virgin, wife, nor widow.

For a brief time, so brief that it could be counted in hours, Sally's nightgown had reassured her, because it was essentially the nightgown of the really married, a nightgown that Mrs. Cupp herself might have worn, and the most moral laundress had not to blush over. Up to the chin, down to the toes, long-sleeved, stiff, solid,

edged at the throat and wrists with plain scallops, this nightgown did at first help Mrs. Cupp to hope that her lodgers were all right; but back came her doubts, and more insistent than before, when she perceived that Cupp too was noticing the young person's appearance, and, though he said nothing, was beginning to behave all sly; and they deepened finally into certainty on her becoming aware of those thickening clusters of loungers constantly hanging about opposite her house. Even young Mr. Carruthers. Oh, she saw him plain enough, and knew all right what he was after; for she hadn't been to the pictures over at Falmouth for nothing, and she had learned from them that that sort of girl got men come buzzing round her as if she were a pot of honey and they just so many flies. Cupp shouldn't, though. Cupp shouldn't get buzzing. Cupp, after fifteen years of being a steady husband, wasn't going to be let buzz—not *much*, said Mrs. Cupp to herself, scouring her kitchen with violence.

She said nothing to him, however, for two, as she would soon show him, could play at his game of acting sly; but when at the end of the first fortnight of the Lukes' stay Jocelyn, on her coming in to clear away the breakfast, got out his money and was preparing as usual to pay her the next week's lodging in advance, she told him without wasting words that the rooms were let.

'Let?' repeated Jocelyn, taken aback.

'There's an end to everything,' said Mrs. Cupp enigmatically, as she cleared the table with great swift swoops.

'But,' protested Jocelyn, annoyed and surprised, 'we intended to stay at least another week.'

'I say there's an end to everything,' said Mrs. Cupp

even more emphatically, crowding the plates noisily on to a tray. 'And one of them's my patience.'

Jocelyn stared. Sally, raising her head from her daily task, on which she was at that moment engaged, looked on with the air of a mild, disinterested angel.

'But what on earth has happened? What's the matter?' asked Jocelyn.

'You only got to cast an eye out of the winder to see what's the matter,' said Mrs. Cupp, jerking her elbow in its direction. '*They* don't collect like that round parties that's respectable.'

And dropping some forks off the overloaded tray she clattered out of the room.

Jocelyn turned swiftly to Sally. 'You see?' he said.

'See wot?' asked Sally, who was about to stoop and pick up the forks, but remembered not to just in time.

Yes; see what, indeed. That it was her fault? That this disgrace had been brought on him through her fault? Was that, Jocelyn asked himself, shocked at the tempest of injustice that had for an instant swept him off his feet, what he wanted her to see?

'I meant,' he said, ashamed of his unfairness, 'you heard. You did hear, didn't you, what the horrible woman was saying?'

Sally nodded. 'Thinks we ain't married,' she said. She seemed quite undisturbed. 'Well, it ain't much use thinkin' we ain't when we are,' she remarked.

'Unfortunately she's sure we're not, so that we are being turned out,' said Jocelyn, dropping her hand, which he had taken, for this placidity, which seemed to him evidence of inability to grasp a situation, instead of soothing made him angry again.

He strode across to the window, and grabbing at the blind pulled it down still lower. How inexpressibly humiliating to be turned out, how unendurable to have people thinking Sally wasn't respectable, and that he, *he* of all people, would come off with a girl for that sort of loathsome lark.

'It ain't much use bein' sure, when I got my marriage lines,' said Sally with the same calm. 'Let alone my weddin' ring.' And she added complacently after a minute, 'Upstairs in my box.' And after a further minute, 'I mean, my marriage lines.'

Then, supposing that the interruption to the lesson might now be regarded as over, and that it would therefore be expected of her that she should get on with it, she applied herself once more with patient industry to her task.

'*H*-usbands *h*-in'abit *h*-eaven,' she began again, assiduously blowing.

'Oh, my God,' said Jocelyn, under his breath.

§

They left St. Mawes during the dinner hour. When Jocelyn told her they were going to leave almost at once, and she had better pack, Sally merely said Right O, and went upstairs to do it.

Right O, thought Jocelyn. Right O. Not a question, not a comment of any kind. Convenient, of course, in a way, but was this companionship? Could there be much character behind such resistlessness? Yet if she had asked questions and made comments he would, he knew, have flown at her; so that he was being unfair again and unreasonable, and he hated himself.

He usedn't to be unfair and unreasonable, he thought,

standing in front of the fireless grate, a wrathful eye on the loungers clotted on the other side of the road ; and as for being angry, such a disturbance of one's balance, whenever he had observed it in others, had seemed to him simply the sign of imperfect education. The uneducated were swept by furies, not scientific thinkers. Now just the contrary was happening, and the uneducated Sally remained serene, while he was in an almost constant condition of emotion of one kind or another. Marriage, he supposed gloomily ; marriage. The invasion of the spirit by the flesh. So absurd, too, the whole thing—God, how absurd when he thought of it in the morning, and remembered the cringing worship of the night before. Absurd, absurd, this nightly abdication of the mind, this abject bowing down of the higher before the lower. . . . The worst of it was he didn't seem able to help himself. Whatever his theories were in the daytime, whatever his critical detachment, he only had to be close to Sally at night. . . .

And in the daytime, instead of at least in the daytime being tranquil and able to get back his balance, every sort of annoyance crowded on him. Were all honeymoons like this ? Impossible. They hadn't got Sally in them. It was Sally who——

The door opened, and there she was again, not ten minutes after having gone up. For Sally's things being of the kind that are quick to pack, owing to their fewness, she was ready and down before he had had time, hardly, to be sure she was going to keep him waiting. So that he resented this too, because he wasn't able to be angry with her over something definite and legitimate. He wanted to have a legitimate excuse for being angry with her, for it was really all her fault that they had been

insulted and turned out. Of course it was. If he had been with his mother, Mrs. Cupp would have been deference itself, and that confounded sea-wall empty. It was all Sally. Looking like that. Looking so different from any one else. Looking so entirely different from the accepted idea of a decent man's wife. Besides, she ought anyhow to have had more things to pack. That one small tin trunk of hers was a disgrace to him. Beastly thing, how he hated it. All yellow. He must get her a proper trunk, and fill it properly, before he could appear with her at Almond Tree Cottage. There certainly were drawbacks to taking a wife in her shift, as one's forbears called it.

Yet, when she came in ready to start, she looked so astonishingly *right*, tin trunk or not, and quite apart from her face. She looked right; her clothes did. She might have been a young duchess, thought Jocelyn, who had never seen a duchess. He hadn't an idea how the miracle was worked. Not by dressmakers and cleverness, of that he was certain, for the poor Pinners would have to buy clothes off the peg. Perhaps because she was so reedy tall. Perhaps because of the way she moved. Perhaps because she was so slender that there hardly seemed to be anything inside the clothes, and they couldn't help, left in this way almost to themselves, hanging in graceful folds. But *he* knew well enough what was inside them—the delicate young loveliness, just beginning to flower; and at the thought his anger all left him, and he didn't care any more about the Cupps or the sea-wall, and the feeling of humility came over him that came over him each time he saw her beauty, and he went to her and took both her hands, her little red hands, the only part of her that had been

got at by life and spoilt, and kissed them, and said, 'Forgive me, Sally.'

'Wot you been doin'?' asked Sally, surprised.

'Not loving you enough,' said Jocelyn, kissing her hands again.

'Now *don't*,' said Sally very earnestly, '*don't* you go thinkin' that, now——' for the idea that she, who had been being loved almost more than she could stand on this trip, and wouldn't have been able to stand if it hadn't been for knowing it was her bounden duty, might have to be loved still more if Mr. Luke got it into his head that she ought to be, excessively alarmed her.

§

The departure was not unmarked, as is sometimes said, by incident. Cupp, when the luggage had to be brought down, wasn't to be found, Mrs. Cupp seemed incommunicably absorbed over a saucepan, and Jocelyn, with some sharpness refusing Sally's help, whose instinct after years spent doing such things was to lay hold of anything that had to be laid hold of and drag it, got the tin box and his suitcase downstairs himself, and said Damn very loud when he knocked his head at the turn of the little staircase.

Sally heard him, and was enormously surprised and shocked. This was swearing. This was what she had been most carefully taught to look upon as real sin. Nothing else had shocked her on the honeymoon, because she had nothing to go by when it came to husbands other than her father's assurance that, except in the daytime, they weren't gentlemen, and her own solemn vows in church to obey; but she knew all about swearing. It was wrong. It was strictly forbidden in God's Holy

Word. That and drink were the two evils spoken of most frequently in her home, and with most condemnation. They went hand in hand. Drink ruined people; and, on their way to ruin and when they had got to it, they swore.

This is what Sally had been brought up to believe, so that when, standing in the doorway of the parlour watching Jocelyn labouring down the stairs with her trunk and longing to give him a hand, she heard him, after knocking his head, say a most loud clear damn, she was horrified. Her husband swearing. And not been drinking, either. Just had his tea as usual at breakfast, and been with her ever since, so she knew he couldn't have. Next thing she'd have to listen to would be God's name being taken in vain; and at the thought of that the blood of all the Pinners, that strictly God-fearing, Sunday-observing, Bible-loving race, surged to her cheeks.

'Mr. *Luke*!' she exclaimed, throwing his teaching as to the avoidance of this name to the winds.

'Hullo?' said Jocelyn, stopping short on the stairs and peering down at her round the edge of the tin trunk, arrested by the note in her voice.

'You didn't ought to swear,' said Sally, taking all her courage in both hands, her face scarlet. 'There's no call for it, and you didn't ought to swear—you *know* you didn't ought to.'

'But I only said damn,' said Jocelyn. 'Wouldn't you, if you bashed your head against this confounded sticking out bit of ceiling?'

'Mr. *Luke*!' cried Sally again, her eyes filling with tears. That he should not only say bad words himself but think her capable of them. . . . Often she had been

bewildered by things he said and did, but now she looked up at him through the tears in her eyes in a complete non-comprehension. It was as though she were boxed away from him behind a great thick wall, or cut off across a great big river, alone on an island, while he stood far off and unreachable on the opposite bank, and she had somehow to get to him, to stay close to him, because he was her husband. Dimly these images presented themselves to her mind, dimly and confused, but nevertheless producing a very clear anxiety and discomfort.

'I'm sorry,' said Jocelyn, carefully coming down the remaining stairs and depositing the trunk sideways in the narrow passage, for though the trunk, as a trunk, was small, the passage, as a passage, was smaller; and in his turn as he looked at her he grew red, for he had just remembered that he never said damn in the presence of his mother or of the other ladies of South Winch, which was a place one didn't swear in, however much and unexpectedly he chanced to hurt himself. Was this *laissez aller* in Sally's presence due to his consciousness that she wasn't a lady, or due to the fact that she was his wife? Jocelyn disliked both these explanations, and accordingly, in his turn, grew red.

'Forgive me, Sally,' he said for the second time within half an hour.

This time she had no doubt as to what had to be forgiven.

'Promise not to do it no more,' she begged. 'Promise now—do.'

'Oh Sally, I'll promise anything, anything,' said Jocelyn staring at her, caught again into emotion by the extraordinary beauty of her troubled face.

'Father says,' said Sally, still looking at him through

tears, 'that if somebody swears, then they drinks. An' if they drinks, then they swears. An' it goes 'and in 'and, and they don't stop ever, once they starts, till they gets to ——.'

She broke off, and stood looking at him in silence. The picture was too awful a one. She couldn't go on.

'What do they get to, my angel, my beautiful angel?' asked Jocelyn, kissing her softly, not listening any more.

''Ell,' whispered Sally.

'Now *you're* swearing,' murmured Jocelyn dreamily, no longer fully conscious, shutting her eyes with kisses. 'Your sweet, sweet eyes,' he murmured, kissing them over and over again.

No, Sally couldn't make head or tail of Mr. Luke. Better not try. Better give it up. *She* swearing?

§

She longed very much for the company of Mr. Pinner.

'Father,' she thought, while Jocelyn was fetching the car, and she was standing alone in the passage watching the luggage, for she had been bred carefully never to leave luggage an instant by itself, 'Father—*'e* could tell me.'

What she wanted Mr. Pinner to tell her wasn't at all clear in her mind, but she was quite clear that he would tell her if he could, whereas Jocelyn, who certainly could, wouldn't. Mr. Luke, she felt in her bones, even if she had the courage to ask him anything would only be angry with her because she didn't already know it; yet how could she know it if nobody had ever told her? At home they usedn't to jump down one's throat if one asked a question. 'Snug,' thought Sally, her head

drooping in wistful recollection, while with the point of her umbrella she affectionately stroked the sides of the tin trunk, 'snug at 'ome in the shop—snug at 'ome in the lil' shop—' and whatever else being married to a gentleman was, it wasn't snug.

Marriage to a gentleman—why, you never knew where you were from one moment to another; nothing settled about it; no cut and come again feeling; all ups and downs, without, as one might say, any middles; all either cross looks or, without warning, red ears, kisses, and oh-Sallyings. It was as if words weren't the same when a gentleman got hold of them. They seemed somehow to separate. Queer, thought Sally, wistfully stroking the tin trunk.

She groped round in her hazy thoughts. She was in a strange country, and there was a fog, and yet she had somehow to get somewhere. *She* swearing?

§

The car came round, and Jocelyn came in.

'Hasn't Cupp turned up yet?' he asked.

Sally shook her head.

'I want him to help me cord the luggage on,' said Jocelyn, squeezing past between her and the trunk.

'I can,' said Sally.

'No you can't,' snapped Jocelyn, striding to the kitchen door and opening it.

'Is Mr. Cupp anywhere about?' he haughtily asked the figure bent over the saucepan. He needed his help, or nothing would have induced him to speak to Mrs. Cupp again.

'No,' said Mrs. Cupp, without ceasing to stir; but being a good woman, who tried always to speak the truth,

she amplified this into accuracy. 'E's somewhere, but he ain't about,' said Mrs. Cupp.

For, having, a short way with her when it came to husbands, she had turned the key that morning on Cupp while he was still asleep, well knowing that he wouldn't dare get banging and shouting lest the neighbours should find out his wife had locked him in, and his shame become public. Besides, he was aware of the reason, and would keep quiet all right, she having had a straight talk with him the night before.

Cupp had been discomfited.

'Don't you go thinkin' you're goin' to get adulteratin' at your age and after 'avin' been a decent 'usband these fifteen years,' said Mrs. Cupp.

''Oo's been adulteratin'?' growled Cupp, strong in the knowledge that he hadn't, but weak in the consciousness that he would have liked to have.

'In your 'eart you 'ave, Cupp,' said Mrs. Cupp, who had her Bible at her fingers' ends, 'and Scripture says it's the same thing.'

Cupp at this sighed deeply, for he knew it wasn't.

'Scripture says,' said Mrs. Cupp, sitting up very straight in bed and addressing Cupp's back as he lay speechless beside her, 'that 'ooso looks at a woman an' lusts after 'er 'as committed adultery with 'er in 'is 'eart. Ain't you been lookin' at that there girl and lustin' after 'er in your 'eart, Cupp? Ain't you? Why, I *seen* you. Seen you doin' it round doors, seen you doin' it out of winders. You been adulteratin' all over the place. *I'll* learn you to get lustin'——'

And when she went downstairs in the morning she locked him in.

So Jocelyn had to carry out the luggage himself,

bidding Sally stay where she was and wait quietly till he called her, and cording it on without the assistance, curtly refused, of the loungers against the sea-wall.

His mother's luggage on their little holiday jaunts had been so neat, so easily handled, fixed on in two minutes; but the tin trunk was a difficult, slippery shape, and anyhow an ignoble object. Every aspect of it annoyed him. It was like going about with a servant's luggage, he thought, wrestling with the thing, which was too high and not long enough, and refused to fit in with his suitcase.

'Off?' inquired one of the loungers affably.

'Looks like it,' said Jocelyn, tugging at the cord.

What a question. Silly ass. 'Do you mind standing a little further back?' he said with icy anger. 'You see, if you come so close I can't get——' he tugged—'any ——' he tugged, setting his teeth—'*purchase*——'

Nobody moved; neither the particular lounger he was speaking to, nor the others.

'Upon my word, sir,' said Jocelyn, jerking round furiously, ready to fight the lot of them.

But they were not attending to him. Their eyes were all fixed on the parlour window, to which Sally, so anxious not to keep Jocelyn waiting a minute when he called as to risk disobeying him, had stolen to see how near ready he was.

There she stood, almost full length, the blind, now that they were leaving, drawn up, and the sun shining straight on her. St. Mawes had not had such a chance before. Its other glimpses of her had been flashes. Nor had the place in all its history ever till now been visited by beauty. Pretty girls had passed through it and disappeared, or stayed in it and disappeared equally

completely because of growing old, and there was a tradition that in the last century the doctor had had a wife who for a brief time was very pretty, and during that brief time caused considerable uproar; but no one living had seen her, it was all hearsay from the last generation. This at the window wasn't hearsay. This was the thing itself, the rare, heavenly thing at its most exquisite moment. Naturally the loungers took no further heed of Jocelyn; naturally with one accord they lifted up their eyes, and greedily drank in.

Jocelyn gave the cord one final and very vicious tug, knotted it somehow, and ran indoors.

'What on earth you must go and stand at the window for——' he exclaimed, hurrying into the room and catching her by the arm. 'I was going to fetch you in a minute. Come along, then—let's start, let's get out of this confounded place. Ready? Got everything? I don't want any delays once we're outside——'

Hastily he looked round the room; there was nothing there. Hastily he looked over Sally; she seemed complete. Then he rushed her out to the car exactly as if, head downwards, they were both plunging into something most unpleasant which had to be gone through before they could escape to freedom.

'Monstrous, monstrous,' said Jocelyn to himself. 'The whole thing is incredible and fantastic. I might be the impresario of a prima donna or a cinema star'—and he remembered, though at the time, like so many other things, it had drifted past his ears unnoticed, that that grotesque creature his father-in-law had said Sally had a gift for collecting crowds.

How painfully true, thought Jocelyn, plunging into the one waiting outside. What a regrettable gift. Of

all gifts this was the one he could best have done without in anybody he was obliged to be with; for he hated crowds, he hated public attention, he was thin-skinned and sensitive directly anything pulled him out of the happy oblivion of his work. As far as he had got in life, and it seemed to him a long way, he judged that quite the best of all conditions was to sit in an eye-proof shell, invisible to and unconscious of what is usually called the world. And speculate; and discover; and verify.

Well, no use thinking of that now.

'Get in, get in,' he urged under his breath, helping Sally with such energy that she was clumsier at it than usual. 'Never mind the rug—you can arrange that afterwards. Here—I'll hold the umbrella——'

They got off. He could drive perfectly well, yet they got off only after a series of forward bounds and the stopping of his engine. But they did get off—through the loungers, past the windows with heads at them, round the sharp corner beyond the houses, up the extraordinarily steep hill.

Sally held her breath. This hill terrified her. Suppose the car, which each time seemed very nearly to stop on it, stopped quite, couldn't go on at all, and they rolled down backwards, down, down, straight into the sea?

But they reached the top safely. It wasn't the car that rolled down backwards that day; it was the tin trunk, and with it Jocelyn's suitcase.

Unconscious, they drove on towards Truro.

VII

§

They drove in total silence. Jocelyn had much to think of, and not for anything would Sally have opened her mouth when Mr. Luke's was shut in that particular tight line. He had see-sawed back again, she knew, and was at the opposite end to what she called his oh-Sally condition. Besides, she never did say anything when she was in the car, however much he tried to make her, for from the beginning, even before there were hills, it had frightened her. Cars hadn't come Mr. Pinner's way, and, except for the one drive with Jocelyn that first day of his courting, she had had no experience of them till now.

This one gave her little joy. It went so fast; it had hairsbreadth escapes at corners; it had twice run over chickens, causing words with other angry gentlemen, and it was full inside, where she had to sit, of important and dangerous-looking handles and pedals that had to have the rug and her dress and her feet and her umbrella carefully kept clear of them, or there would be that which she called to herself, catching her breath with fear, a naccident.

Jocelyn had said once, very peremptorily and making hurried movements with his left hand, 'For goodness sake don't let that rug get mixed up with the gears——' for the car was a Morris-Cowley, and what Sally thought

of with anxiety as them 'andles were between her and Jocelyn, and it had been enough. The tone of his voice on that occasion had revealed to her that a combination of rug and gears, and therefore of anything else and gears, such as dress, feet or umbrella, would be instantly disastrous, and he never had to say it again.

For the rest of the honeymoon she sat squeezed together as far away from the alarming things as she could, the rug tucked with anxious care tightly round her legs, and her feet cramped up in the corner. She was very uncomfortable, but that mattered nothing to Sally. Even if she hadn't been afraid of what might happen, her own comfort, when the wishes of her elders and betters were in question, wouldn't have been given a thought. The Pinners were like that. Their humility and patience would have been remarkable even in a saint, and as for their bumps of veneration, they were so big that that country would indeed be easy to govern which should be populated by many Pinners.

The late Mrs. Pinner, not of course herself a Pinner proper, but of the more turbulent blood of a race from Tottenham called Skew, had disliked these virtues in Mr. Pinner, and thought and frequently told him that a shopkeeper shouldn't have them at all. A shopkeeper's job, she often explained, was to leave off being poor as soon as possible, and Mr. Pinner never at any time left off being that—all because, Mrs. Pinner asserted, he had no go; and having no go was her way of describing patience and humility. But in Sally, when these qualities began to appear, she encouraged them, for they made for the child's safety, they kept her obedient and unquestioning, they sent her cheerfully to bed when other girls were going to the pictures, and caused her

to be happy for hours on end by herself in the back parlour performing simple duties. Besides, though Mrs. Pinner would have been hard put to it to give it a name, in Sally patience and humility were somehow different from what they were in Pinner. They held their heads up more. They didn't get their tails between their legs. They were in fact in Sally, though Mrs. Pinner could only feel this dumbly, never getting anywhere near thinking it, not abject things that quivered in corners, but gracious things that came to meet one with a smile.

Filled, then, as ever, with these meek virtues, Sally, squeezed into as little space as possible, and bracing herself, having got safely to the top of the hill, to meet the next terror, which was the twisty, slippery, narrow steep road down to the ferry, and the twisty, slippery, narrow steep road up from it on the other side, and after that the terror of every corner, round each of which she was sure would lurk a broad-beamed charabanc,—was carried in the Morris-Cowley in the direction of Truro. Here, Jocelyn supposed, they had better stay the night. Here there were hotels, and he would be able to consider what he would do next.

He urged the little car along as fast as it would go, for he was possessed by the feeling that if he only got away fast enough he would get away altogether. But get away altogether from what? Certainly from St. Mawes, and Mrs. Cupp, and the loungers who all of course also supposed he and Sally weren't married. That was the first, the immediate necessity. He had not only been turned out, but turned out, he said to himself, with contumely,—no use saying it to Sally, because she wouldn't know what contumely was, and it

did seem to him really rather absurd to be going about with somebody who had never heard even of such an ordinary thing as contumely.

It wasn't her fault, of course, but the turning out and the contumely were obviously because of her ; there was no denying that. His mother would have been sitting in those rooms at this moment, the most prized and cherished of lodgers. Obviously the whole thing was Sally's fault, though he quite admitted she couldn't help it. But it merely made it worse that she couldn't, for it took away one's confidence in the future, besides making it unfair to say anything unkind.

Feeling that if he did say anything it might easily be unkind, he kept his mouth tight shut, and drove in total silence ; and Sally, whenever the road was fairly straight and could be left for a moment unwatched, looked at him out of the corners of her eyelashes, and was very sorry for Usband, who seemed upset again.

'Stomach,' concluded Sally, who could find no other explanation for Jocelyn's ups and downs ; and wondered whether she would ever dare bring to his notice a simple remedy her father, who sometimes suffered too but with less reserve, always had by him.

Well, there was one thing to be said for all this, thought Jocelyn, his stern eye fixed straight ahead, his brow severe, as he hurried the car along the road to the ferry—he was now awake. At last. High time too. Till then, from the day he first saw Sally, in spite of moments of grave spiritual disturbance and annoyance, he had been in a feverish dream. Out of this dream Mrs. Cupp's conduct had shaken him, and he believed he might now be regarded as through with the phase in which he thought of nothing but the present and let the

future go hang. Now he had to think. Decisions were being forced on him. Holidays end, but life goes on; honeymoons finish, but wives don't. Here he was with a wife, and upon his soul, thought Jocelyn, precious little else,—no career, no plans, no lodgings.

What a position. The lodgings, of course, were a small thing, but how being turned out of them rankled! His life had been so dignified. He and his mother had never once come across a member of the lower classes who was rude. At South Winch all was order, decency, esteem in their own set and respectfulness from everybody else. At Ananias what order, what decency, what esteem, what respectfulness. Impossible at Ananias, however modest one might be, not to know that one was looked upon as a present pride and a future adornment, with the Master at the top of the scale invariably remembering who one was and graciously smiling, and at the bottom the almost affectionate attentions of one's warm and panting bedmaker. Impossible, too, not to know, though this, except for the pleasure it gave his mother, was of no sort of consequence, that South Winch regarded him with interest. These attitudes hadn't at all disarranged Jocelyn's grave balance, hadn't at all turned his head, because of his real and complete absorption in his work; but they had been there—a fitting and seemly background, a sunny, sheltering wall against which he could expand, in quiet security, the flowers of his ambitions.

Now here he was, kicked out into the street—it amounted to that—by a person of the utmost obscurity called Cupp. Conceive it. Conceive having got into a position in which anybody called Cupp could humiliate him.

He banged his fist down on the electric horn as an outlet to his feelings. It gave a brief squeak, and was silent.

'Horn's gone wrong,' he said, pressing it hard but getting nothing more out of it.

Sally's heart gave a thump. To have anything go wrong at such a moment! For they were on that road cut in the hillside, narrow, twisty, slippery and steep, which leads on the St. Mawes side down through a wood, charming that late March afternoon with the mild sun slanting through the pale, grey-green branches of naked trees across flocks of primroses, to the King Harry Ferry. Far down on Sally's side she could have seen, if she had dared look, the placid waters of the Fal, unruffled in their deep shelter by the wind that was blowing along the open country at the top. Her anxious eyes, however, were not in search of scenery—at no time was she anything of a hand at scenery,—they were strained towards each fresh corner as it came in sight; for one day they had met a charabanc round one of those very corners, a great wide horror taking up nearly all the road. But luckily that day they were coming up the hill, not going down it, and so they had the inside, and not the unprotected, terrifying outside edge. Now they were outside, and suppose . . .

'Horn's gone wrong,' said Jocelyn, just as she was thinking that.

But did it matter? she asked herself, seeking comfort. She tried to hope it didn't. Horns weren't like wheels. One didn't depend on them for getting along. They just made noises. Useful, as one's voice was useful, but not essential, like one's legs.

No, it didn't matter much, evidently, for Usband was

saying he would put it right while they were on the ferry,—and then her heart gave a much bigger thump, and seemed to leap into her mouth and crouch there trembling, for there, round the very next corner, a few yards in front of them, was another charabanc.

'My gracious goodness,' thought Sally, the colour ebbing out of her face as she stiffened in her seat and held on tighter. 'My gracious *goodness*——'

But it was going down too; thank heaven it was going down too—making, even as they were making, for the ferry.

Jocelyn banged again on his horn, which gave another weak squeak and then was silent.

'Oh, 'e ain't goin' to try and pass it? 'E ain't goin' to try and pass it?' Sally asked herself, clutching the side of the car.

The charabanc, however, was unaware that anything had come down the hill behind it, and continued in the middle of the narrow road; and to Sally's relief Jocelyn stole quietly along close up to its back, for he thought that if he kept right up against it and made no noise the people in it wouldn't be able to see Sally, and he wouldn't have to sit there impotently watching the look spreading over their faces when they caught sight of her that by now he knew only too well.

All went smoothly till they were on the ferry. The charabanc drove straight to the farther end of it, and Jocelyn slipped along close behind, and then, getting out, still unobserved, opened his bonnet and began to deal with the horn.

He had no side-horn with him. It had been removed by an idiot who lived on his staircase at Ananias, and who constantly saw fun where no one else did. He saw

fun in removing Jocelyn's horn ; and though on serious representations being made he restored it, it hadn't been fixed on again, because Jocelyn soon after that met Sally, and everything else was blotted from his mind. Now he remembered it, and cursed the silly idiot through whose fault it wasn't at that moment on the car. Still, he would soon set the electric one right ; there couldn't be much the matter with it.

He proceeded, his head inside the bonnet, to set it right, and Sally, feeling safe for a bit with Jocelyn outside the car, looked on sympathetically. She wanted to help, if only by holding something, but knew she mustn't move. The back of the great charabanc towered above their little two-seater as the stern of a liner towers above a tug. All was quiet up there. The tops of the heads of the last row of passengers were motionless, their owners no doubt being engaged in contemplating the scenery of the Fal.

Then suddenly under Jocelyn's manipulations the horn began to blow, and the row of heads, startled into attentiveness by this unexpected shrieking immediately underneath them, turned and peered down over the edge of the charabanc's back. Then they saw Sally, and their peering became fixed.

But Jocelyn had no time for that now ; what was of importance at the moment was that the horn wouldn't stop. It shrieked steadily ; and though he leapt backwards and forwards from the part of it that was in the bonnet to the part of it that was on the steering-wheel and did things rapidly and violently in both places, it went on shrieking.

Here was a nice thing, he thought, to happen to a man whose one aim was to be unnoticed. It was

fortunate that the noise drowned what he was saying, for so Sally hadn't the shock of hearing him break his recent promise; and, much surprised at the conduct of the horn, she was shaken out of her usual prudent silence and was moved to draw Jocelyn's attention to its behaviour by remarking, on one of his flying visits to the steering wheel, that it wasn't half hollering.

'Oh, shut *up*!' cried Jocelyn, beside himself; and who knows whether he meant Sally or the horn?

Sally took it that he was addressing the horn, and observed sympathetically that it didn't seem to want to.

'If only I had a small screwdriver!' cried Jocelyn, frantically throwing out the contents of his tool-box in search of what wasn't there. 'I don't seem to have a small screwdriver—a *small* screwdriver—has anybody got a *small* screwdriver?'

The ferryman had no screwdriver, big or small, and the driver of the charabanc, descended from his place to come and look on, had none small enough; while as for the passengers, now all standing on their seats and craning their necks, nothing was to be expected of them except absorption in Sally.

'Scissors would do—scissors, scissors!' cried Jocelyn, who felt that if the horn didn't stop he would go mad.

Nobody had any scissors except Sally, who got on her feet quickly and delightedly, because now she could help—the heads craned more than ever—and said she had a pair at the bottom of her trunk.

'No, no,' said Jocelyn, unable even for the sake of perhaps stopping the horn to face uncording and unpacking before the whole ferry that terrible tin trunk of hers. 'Sit still, Sally——'

And he began to hit whatever part seemed nearest to the noise with his clenched fist.

'*That* won't do no good,' said the driver of the charabanc, grinning.

The grin spread to the face of the ferryman, and began to appear on the faces piled up over the top of the charabanc.

Jocelyn saw it, and suddenly froze into icy impassiveness. Whatever the damned horn chose to do he wasn't going to provide entertainment for a lot of blasted trippers. Besides—was he losing his temper? He, who had supposed for years that he hadn't got one?

He slammed the bonnet to, flung the tools back into their box, got into his seat again, and sat waiting to drive off the ferry with a completely expressionless face, just as if nothing at all were happening; and Sally, deluded by his calm into supposing that he thought the horn was now all right, after waiting a moment anxiously and seeing that he didn't do anything more, nudged him gently and told him it was still blowing.

'Is it?' said Jocelyn; and there was something in the look he gave her that made her more sure than ever that speech with Usband was a mistake.

It blew all the way to Truro. That was the nearest place where the thing could be taken to a garage, and kicked to pieces if nothing else would stop it. For ten miles it blew steadily. They streamed, shrieking, along the lanes and out on to the main road. The drive was a nightmare of astonished faces, of people rushing out of cottages, of children shouting, of laughter flashing and gone, to be succeeded by more and more, till the whole of every mile seemed one huge exclamation.

Sally squeezed terror-stricken into her corner. Such

speed as this she had never dreamed of, nor had it ever yet been got out of the Morris-Cowley. She could only cling and hope. The noise was deafening. The little car leapt into the air at every bump in the road. Jocelyn's face was like a marble mask. The charabanc, being bound for Falmouth, turned off to the left at the main road, and the passengers rose as one man in their seats and waved handkerchiefs of farewell; while Sally, even at such a moment unable not to be polite, let go the side of the car an instant to search with trembling fingers for her handkerchief and wave it back.

§

At Truro he stopped at the first garage he saw, a small one in the outlying part of the town, where there were few passers-by. The few there were, however, immediately collected round the car that swooped down the hill on them hooting, and still went on hooting in spite of having stopped.

How simple, if it had been his mother who was with him, to have asked her to walk on to an hotel or a confectioner's, and wait for him while he had the horn seen to. She would have proceeded through the town unobserved and unmolested, and the hotel or confectioner would have received her without curiosity, and attended respectfully to her wants. Or she might have waited in the car, and there too she would have aroused neither interest nor comment. A lady, you see. A lady, turning, like a decent Italian house, her plain and expressionless side to the public of the street, and keeping her other side, her strictly private and delightful other side, for her family and friends.

He hurried Sally into the garage, into the furthermost

depths of the garage. Not for her, he felt, were quiet walks alone through streets and unquestioning acceptance at hotels ; not for him the convenience, the comfort, of a companion who in a crisis needn't be bothered about, who automatically became effaced. Nothing effaced Sally. Her deplorable conspicuousness made it impossible for her to go anywhere without him. She had to be accompanied and protected as watchfully as if she were the Crown Jewels. Yes, or a perambulator with a baby in it that could never be left alone for an instant, and was always having to be pushed about by somebody. That somebody was himself, Jocelyn Luke ; Jocelyn Luke, who as recently as a month ago was working away, hopeful and absorbed, immersed in profoundly interesting and important studies, independent, with nothing at all to trammel him or hinder him—with, on the contrary, everything and everybody conspiring to leave him as untrammelled and unhindered as possible. What was he now ? Why, the perambulator's nursemaid. Just that : the perambulator's attendant nursemaid.

This seemed to Jocelyn fantastic.

' Wait here, will you ? ' he said, hurrying her into the garage and depositing her like a parcel in the remotest corner. ' Don't move, will you, till I fetch you——'

And he left her there, safe as far as he could see, and went back to the shrieking car.

She sat down thankfully on a pile of empty petrol cans. If only she could be left there for a good long while, if only she could spend the rest of the day there. . . . ' Don't move,' Usband had said ; as though she wanted to ! Except that she was very hungry, really hungry now that her fears were over, for she had had no dinner yet, and it was two o'clock, how happy would she

have been to stay there without moving for the rest of the afternoon. The quiet corner, away from danger, away from having to guess what she ought to say to Usband, and away from the look he gave her when she had said it, seemed almost perfect. It would have been quite perfect if there had been anything to eat.

And as if in answer to her wish, the little door into a shed at the back opened, and in walked a youth, smudged and pasty-looking as those look who work much in garages, bearing in his hand a basin tied up in a crimson handkerchief.

This was young Mr. Soper, the most promising of the mechanics employed at the garage, who daily ate his dinner in that corner. There he could sit on the pile of empty petrol cans, out of sight and yet within earshot should his services suddenly be called for; and on this particular day, his firm having been by chance extra busy all the morning, he had gone later than usual into the private shed at the back to fetch the basin of food left there for him by his landlady's little son, so that when Jocelyn took Sally into the corner it was empty, because Mr. Soper, instead of being in the middle of his dinner as he would have been on other days, was in the act of collecting it in the shed.

'Beg pardon, Miss,' he said, staring at Sally, his mouth dropping open. 'Beg pardon, I'm sure, Miss——'

And he put his arm quickly back round the door he had just come through and whipped out a chair. 'Won't you—won't you sit more comfortable, Miss?'

'Don't mind if I do,' said Sally, getting up and smiling politely.

Mr. Soper's pasty face became bright red at that smile. He proceeded to dust the seat of the chair by rubbing the

bottom of his handkerchiefed basin up and down it, and then stood staring at the young lady, the basin dangling sideways in his hand, held carelessly by the knotted corners of its handkerchief, and some of its gravy accordingly dribbling out.

'It do smell nice, don't it,' remarked Sally as she sat down, unable to refrain from sniffing.

'What do, Miss?' asked Mr. Soper, recognising with almost incredulous pleasure a manner of speech with which he was at his ease.

'Wot you got in that there basin,' said Sally, also recognising, and also with pleasure, accents since her marriage become very dear to her because reminiscent of home.

She smiled with the utmost friendliness at him. Mr. Soper found it difficult to believe his eyes.

'It's my dinner,' said Mr. Soper, gazing at the vision.

'Well, I didn't suppose it was your Sunday 'at,' said Sally, pleased to find that she too, given a chance, could say clever things. 'Tell by the smell it ain't a nat.'

Mr. Soper also seemed to think this clever, for he laughed, as Sally put it to herself, like anything.

'Stew?' she asked, her delicate nose describing little half circles of appreciative inquiry.

'That's right,' said Mr. Soper. 'Irish.'

'Thought so,' said Sally; and added with a sigh, 'the best of the lot.'

Mr. Soper being intelligent, though handicapped at the moment by not quite believing his eyes, thought he here perceived encouragement to untie the handkerchief. He put the basin on the floor at the young lady's feet, and untied it. She gazed at the lovely contents, at potatoes showing their sleek sides through the brimming

gravy, at little ends of slender cutlets, at glimpses of bright carrots, at pearly-shouldered onions gleaming from luscious depths, with such evident longing that he was emboldened to ask her if she wouldn't oblige him by tasting it, and telling him her opinion of it as a stew.

'There's stews and stews, you know, Miss,' he said, hastily arranging it on an empty packing-case convenient for her, 'but my old woman's who looks after me is 'ard to beat——'

And he ran into the little shed he had come out of, and after a minute's rummaging brought her a spoon and plate. His own spoon was in his pocket. He didn't use a plate.

Sally tasted; and, having tasted, went on tasting. Soon there was danger that Mr. Soper's dinner would be so much tasted that there wouldn't be any left, but he cared nothing for that. If he had had a hundred stews, and he starving, they should all have been the young lady's.

Sally tried not to taste too much, but she was so hungry, and the stew was so lovely. Besides, the young man kept urging her to go on. He was more like a friend than any one she had yet met. That he should never take his eyes off her didn't disturb her in the least, for she had been used to that all her life; and his language was her language, and he didn't make her feel nervous, and she knew instinctively that she could do nothing wrong in his sight, and she talked more to him during the half hour they ate the stew together—for she presently insisted on his getting another plate and joining in—than she had talked to Jocelyn the whole time they had known each other; talked more to him, indeed, than she had

ever talked to anybody, except, when she was little, to those girl friends who had later fallen away.

How surprising, how delightful, the ease with which she said things to Mr. Soper, and the things that came into her head to say! Quite clever, she was; quite sharp, and quick at the take-up. And laugh—why, the young fellow made her laugh so that she could hardly keep from choking. Not in all her life had she laughed as Mr. Soper made her laugh. Bright, he was, and no mistake. While as for Mr. Soper himself, who could be much, much brighter, he was fortunately kept damped down to his simpler jokes by the effect the strange young lady's loveliness had on him; so that he who in Truro was known as the life of his set, as the boldest of its wits as well as the most daring of its ladies' men, was as mild and timid in his preliminary frisks with Sally as a lately born lamb exploring, for the first time, the beautiful strange world it had suddenly discovered.

§

Jocelyn found them there, the empty basin on the floor between them, and, sticking up in it, two spoons.

'My 'usband,' introduced Sally, starting a little, for she had forgotten Jocelyn; and Mr. Soper had what he afterwards described as the turn of his life.

She with a husband? She who was hardly old enough, if you asked him, to have a father even? Got a husband all the time, and eaten his stew. He didn't grudge her the stew, but he did think she ought to have told him she had a husband. Fancy eating his stew, and knowing she had a husband the whole time. It seemed to make it unfair. It seemed to make it somehow false pretences. And one of these blinking gentlemen, too; one of your

haw-haw chaps with the brains of a rabbit, thought Mr. Soper, looking Jocelyn up and down, who took no notice of him whatever. See that written all over him, thought Mr. Soper, seeking comfort in derision,—a silly fool who couldn't even mend his own horn. Wicked, he called it, wicked, to thieve this girl away from her own lot, filch her, before she knew what she was about, from her natural mates, go-ahead chaps like, for instance, himself, when there were thousands of female rabbits in his own class who would have fitted him like so many blooming gloves.

'Class should stick to class,' said Mr. Soper to himself, who belonged to at least four societies for violently welding all classes into one, the one being Mr. Soper's.

Jocelyn ignored him. ('Haw, haw,' thought Mr. Soper derisively, hurt by this, and sticking out a chin that no one noticed.) Shutting his eyes to the hideous evidence of the two spoons in the basin, to which he would refer, he decided, later, he took Sally's arm and hurried her out to the now silent Morris-Cowley. This had not been his intention when he came in. He had intended to tell her that he had just discovered the loss of the luggage, that he was going back at once to look for it, and leave her there, where she was safe and private, till he came back.

The sight of the basin and spoons forced him to other decisions. She was obviously neither safe nor private. He said nothing at all, but gripping her arm with, perhaps, unnecessary vigour seeing how unresistingly she went, hurried her out of the place and helped her, again with, perhaps, unnecessary vigour into her seat, slamming the door on her and hastening round to the other side to his own.

Mr. Soper, however, was hard on their heels. Nothing

if not nippy, he was determined to see the last of her who not only was the first human being he had met to whom he could imagine going down on his knees, but also—thus did romance and reality mingle in his mind—who contained at that moment at least three-quarters of his Irish stew. It seemed to give him a claim on her. Inside himself was the remaining quarter, and it did seem to unite them. Mortified as he was, deceived as he felt himself to be, he yet couldn't help, in his mind, making a joke about this union, which he thought so good that he decided to tell it to his friends that night at the whist-drive he was going to—it need not be repeated here,—and he was so excessively nippy, such a very smart, all-there, seize-your-opportunity young man, that he actually managed to say in Sally's left ear during the brief moment Jocelyn was on his way round to the other side, bending down ostensibly to examine the near back tyre, 'Whatever did you want to go and marry one of them haw-haw fellers for, when there was——'

But what there was Sally never heard, for at that instant the car leaped forward, leaving him on the kerb alone.

There he stood, looking after it; apparently merely a pale, contemptuous mechanic, full of the proper scorn for a shabby little four-year-old two-seater—he could of course date it exactly—but really a baffled young man who had just been pulled up and thwarted in the very act of falling, for the first time in his life, passionately and humbly in love.

§

The Thistle and Goat was where Jocelyn took her. It was the first hotel he saw. He had to deposit her

somewhere ; he couldn't take her with him in search of the luggage, and have her hanging round while he picked it up and corded it on again, and making friends with anybody who came along. Would she obey him and stay in the bedroom, or would he be forced to the absurdity of locking her in ? He was so seriously upset by the various misfortunes of the day that he was ready to behave with almost any absurdity. He was quite ready, for instance, to fight that spotted oaf at the garage ; he had itched to knock him down, and had only been restrained by a vision of the crowd that would collect, and a consciousness of how it would advertise Sally. To lock her in her room was, he admitted, a violent sort of thing to do, and violence, he had been brought up to believe, was always vulgar and ridiculous, but it would anyhow be effective. Definite and strongly simple measures were, he perceived, needful with Sally, especially when one was in a hurry. He couldn't, with the luggage lying somewhere on the road between Truro and St. Mawes, probably burst open and indecently scattered and exposed, start explaining to Sally all the things she was on no account to do while he was away collecting it. He certainly would explain ; and fully ; and clearly ; for the spoon and basin business had been simply disgusting, and he was going to put a stop to that sort of thing once and forever, but not now,—not till there was plenty of time, so that he really might have a chance of getting into her head at least the beginning of a glimmer of what a lady simply couldn't do. And he was so angry that he corrected this sentence, and instead of the word lady substituted the wife of a gentleman.

He locked her in.

'If any one knocks,' he told her before leaving her, 'you will call out that you have locked the door, as you wish to be undisturbed. You understand me, Sally? That's what you are to say—nothing else. Exactly and only that.'

'Right O,' said Sally, a little dejectedly, for his tone and expression discouraged cheerfulness, and preparing to lock the door behind him.

But it was he who locked it, much to her surprise, deftly pulling the key out of the inside of the door and slipping it into the outside before she realised what he was doing; and she heard him, having turned it, draw it out and go away.

Yes, she was locked in all right.

'Whatever——' began Sally in her thoughts; then gave it up, and sat down patiently on the edge of the wicker arm-chair to wait for the next thing that would happen to her.

'Glad I 'ad that there stew,' she reflected.

'My wife,' said Jocelyn to the lady in the office downstairs, as he went out still with the frown on his face caused by the realisation that he hadn't given Sally any reason for his suddenly leaving her, and that she hadn't asked for any—was that companionship?—'wishes to be undisturbed till I come back.'

'*I* see,' said the lady, with what seemed to him rather a curious emphasis, and she was about to inquire where his luggage was, for the Thistle and Goat liked to know where luggage was, when he strode away.

Now what did she see, Jocelyn asked himself. Nobody had ever said *I* see like that to any orders given when he was travelling with his mother. The emphasis was marked. It sounded, he thought, both suspicious

and pert. He went out to the car, strangling a desire to go back and ask her what she saw. Did she too think he wasn't really married? No, no—nonsense. Probably she saw and meant nothing. Really he was becoming sensitive beyond all dignity, he thought as he drove off on his unpleasant and difficult quest.

But the lady in the office had merely expressed herself badly. What was worrying her was not what she saw but what she didn't see, and what she didn't see was luggage. The Thistle and Goat, in common with other hotels, liked luggage. It preferred luggage to be left rather than ladies. Now the gentleman had gone off without saying a word about it, and she tried to reassure herself by hoping, what was indeed true, that he had gone to fetch it, and that she need do nothing about it, anyhow for the present. And hardly had she settled down to a cup of after-luncheon tea in the back office when the luggage arrived, brought in by a different gentleman, and one, to her great relief, whom she knew—young Mr. Carruthers, of Trevinion Manor.

Great was the confidence the Thistle and Goat had in the family of Carruthers, whom it had known all its life. No orders given by a passing tourist could have any weight when balanced against a Carruthers request. So that when young Mr. Carruthers, learning that Mr. Luke had lately left in his car, asked to see Mrs. Luke in order to hand over her luggage personally and desired his card to be sent up, regardless of the orders given by Mr. Luke the card was sent up and the message given; and Sally received both it and the message, for the chambermaid, finding the door locked and getting no answer, because Sally thought that by saying nothing she wouldn't be telling any lies, unlocked it

with her pass-key ; and Sally, having heard the message and received the card, issued forth obediently. Naturally she did. Usband had said nothing about not leaving the room. She wanted her tin box, and to get unpacked. Besides, when anybody sent for her she always went.

What had happened was that young Carruthers, strolling down as usual just before lunch across the fields to the sea-front, had found the window of the Cupp parlour flung wide open, and Mrs. Cupp vigorously shaking the hearth-rug out of it. Evidently her lodgers had left ; and he went in and began asking her about them, and very soon discovered that the lean chap was Jocelyn Luke—Luke of Ananias, as Carruthers, himself at Oxford, instantly identified him, for there couldn't well be two Jocelyn Lukes, and his reputation had ebbed across to Oxford, where he was known not unfavourably, and perhaps as on the whole the least hopelessly unpromising of the Cambridge crowd. And just as Mrs. Cupp was proceeding to tell him her opinion of the alleged Mrs. Luke, and how Cupp had only now been able to come out of his bedroom and have his dinner, there came news of the dropped luggage on the hill.

Carruthers felt that he was the very man to deal with that. He rushed off, thrust everybody aside, collected it reverently, for the tin trunk had indeed burst open, and its modest contents, of a touching propriety he thought, as he carefully put back things that felt like flannel, were scattered on the road, and then, fetching his car, took it into Truro.

It was easy, at the turn to Falmouth, to discover which way the Lukes had gone. It was also easy, on arriving in Truro, to discover which hotel they were in.

He only had to describe them. Everybody had noticed them. Everybody on the road had heard their horn, and everybody had seen the beautiful young lady. And because he went into the town by the direct road, and as Jocelyn coming out of it, and sure the luggage hadn't anyhow been dropped nearer than the top of the hill beyond the garage, took a round-about way, joining the main road only on the other side of the garage so as not again to have to set eyes on the loathsome oaf employed in it and risk being unable to resist going in and knocking him down, they missed each other precisely there; and accordingly when Jocelyn, having been all the way to St. Mawes, where he heard what had been done, got back about five, tired, very hungry, and wondering how on earth he was now going to find the officious person they said was trying to restore his belongings to him, he was told by the boots that young Mr. Carruthers had arrived just after he left, and was waiting to see him upstairs in the drawing-room.

'Thank heaven,' thought Jocelyn, feeling the key in his pocket, 'that I locked her in.'

And he went into the drawing-room, and there at a table in a corner by the fire, with the remains on it of what seemed to have been an extraordinarily good and varied tea, she was sitting.

§

Carruthers—he recognised him at once as the man with the dog called Sally—was worshipping her. Decently, for Carruthers was plainly a decent chap, but worshipping her all right; it was written in every line and twist of him, as he leaned forward eagerly, telling her stories, apparently, for he was talking a great deal and

she was only listening,—amusing stories, for she was smiling.

She never smiled with him, thought Jocelyn ; not like that, not a real smile of just enjoyment. From the very first day, that day at tea in the Pinner parlour, she had seemed frightened of him. But she couldn't be much frightened, for here she was openly disregarding his injunctions, and somehow got out of her locked room. That seemed to Jocelyn anything but being frightened ; it seemed to him to the last degree fearless and resourceful. And how strangely at variance with her apparent shyness and retiringness that twice in one day she should have allowed strange men to feed her.

He approached their corner, pale and grim. He was tired to death after the vexatious day he had had, and very hungry after not having had anything to eat since breakfast. Carruthers had watched his opportunity, of course—waited somewhere till he had seen him go, and then taken the luggage in and asked for Sally. And Sally, somehow getting out of that room, had defied his orders and come down. Well, he couldn't do anything with her at that moment. He was too tired to flare up. Besides—scenes ; he couldn't for ever make scenes. What a revolting form of activity to have thrust upon him ! But the amount of ideas that would, he perceived, have to be got into her head if life was to be even approaching tolerable was so great that his mind, in his fatigued state, refused to consider it.

She saw him first, and, much pleased with everything, with the beautiful tea, with Mr. Carruthers' funny stories and with her pleasant afternoon altogether, continued to smile, but at him now, and said to Carruthers, ' 'Ere comes Mr. Luke.'

And on Carruthers getting up and Jocelyn arriving at the table, introduced them.

'My 'usband,' introduced Sally; explaining Carruthers to Jocelyn by saying, 'The gentleman as brought our traps.'

Jocelyn couldn't be angry with Carruthers; he looked at him so friendlily, and shook his hand with what surely was a perfectly sincere heartiness. And though he was obviously bowled over by Sally—naturally, thought Jocelyn, seeing that he had none of the responsibility and only the fun—there was something curiously sympathetic in his attitude to Jocelyn himself, something that seemed, oddly, to understand.

Sally, his wife, said, for instance, ''Ad yer tea?'—just that, and made no attempt to give him any. But what Carruthers said, quickly going across and ringing the bell, was, 'I bet you haven't. You've had the sort of rotten day there's no time for anything in but swearing. They'll bring some fresh stuff in a moment. It's a jolly good tea they give one in this place,—don't they, Mrs. Luke.'

''*Ave*nly,' said Sally. And turning to Jocelyn she said, more timidly, ''Ad to come out of the bedroom. The servant——'

'Oh, that's all right,' interrupted Jocelyn hastily, earnestly desiring to keep from Carruthers the knowledge that he had locked her in. Things look so different, especially domestic actions, in the eyes of a third person unaware of the attendant circumstances, thought Jocelyn.

He dropped into a chair. What a comfort it was, after a fortnight of being dog alone with Sally, to hear that decent voice. It really was like music. He hadn't,

at Cambridge, cared much for the Oxford way of speaking, but how beautiful it seemed after the Pinner way. He wanted to shut his eyes and just listen to it. 'Go on, go on,' he wanted to say, when Carruthers paused for a moment in his pleasant talk; and he sat there, listening and eating and drinking in silence, and Carruthers looked after him, and fed him, and talked pleasantly to him, and talked pleasantly to Sally as well, and did, in fact, all the talking. There was something about Jocelyn that made Carruthers feel maternal. He was so thin. His shoulder blades stuck out so, and his lean, nervous face twitched. Carruthers thought, as he had thought on that first occasion, only this time, knowing who he was and aware of Sally's class, with ten times more conviction, 'Poor devil'; but he also thought, his eyes resting on the lovely thing in the corner—he had established her in the farthermost corner of the Thistle and Goat's drawing-room, for he too had instantly begun to hide her, and she lit up its gloom as a white flower lights up the dusk—he also thought, 'Poor angel.'

§

Yes, she was an angel, and a poor one; he was sure of that. Carruthers, so romantic inside, so square and unemotional outside, told himself she was a forlorn child-angel torn out of her natural heaven, which obviously was completely h—less and obscure, but comfortable and unexacting, and pitched into a world of strangers, the very ABC of whose speech and behaviour she didn't understand.

After two hours *tête à tête* with Sally, two hours which seemed like ten minutes, so deeply was he interested, this was his conclusion. She hadn't been very shy, not

after he left off being shy, which he was for a moment or two, confused by the sheer shock of her beauty seen close ; but he had soon recovered and got into his stride, which was an easy one for her to keep up with, his one idea being to please her and make her happy.

It wasn't difficult to please Sally and make her happy ; you had only to avoid frightening her. Mr. Soper hadn't frightened her, he had fed her,—always a good beginning with a woman. Carruthers knew this, and immediately ordered tea, in spite of its still being only three o'clock ; and, since the Thistle and Goat specialised in teas, the one which was presently brought was of such a conspicuous goodness, with so many strange Cornish cakes and exciting little sandwiches, besides a bowl of the Cornish cream Sally liked altogether best of anything she had learned to know on her honeymoon, that she soon felt as comfortable and friendly with Carruthers as she had with Mr. Soper.

She was at the age of jam. Cream was still enough to make her happy. And she wasn't used to quantities. In her frugal life there had never been quantities of anything, and they excited her. Quantities combined with kindness—what could be more delightful ? She didn't suppose she had enjoyed anything so much ever as that tea. And it was sheer enjoyment, nothing to do with hunger at all, for hunger had been done away with by Mr. Soper's stew, and this was a deliberate choosing, a splendid unnecessariness, a sense of wide margin, of freedom, of power, and no need to think of putting away what was left over for next day.

So by the time that Carruthers said, with that simplicity which made his mother sure there was no one in the world like her Gerry, ' I've never seen any one as

beautiful as you, and I didn't know there could be anybody,' Sally, unstiffened and lubricated by all the cream, was quite ready to discuss her appearance or anything else with him as far as she, restricted of speech as she was, could discuss at all, and he discovered to his deep surprise that she regarded her beauty as a thing to be apologised for, as a pity, as the same thing really as a deformity, forcing her to be conspicuous and nothing but a worry to those she loved and who loved her, and she not able to help it or alter it, or do anything at all except be sorry.

'Father,' she said, 'was in a state—you've no idea. If any one just looked my way. And they was always lookin'.'

Carruthers nodded. Just what he had been thinking when first he saw her on the hill behind St. Mawes, with Luke trying to cover her up, to extinguish her quickly in her hat,—the responsibility, the anxiety. . . . But that she herself should regard it like that astonished him. Surely any woman . . .

'And Mr. Luke—*'e's* frightened too. 'Ides me, same as Father and Mother used.'

'You're really imprisoned, then,' said Carruthers, staring at her. 'Imprisoned in your beauty.'

But seeing a puzzled expression come into her eyes he began to talk of other things, to tell her stories, to amuse her; for after all it wasn't very fair to Luke, somehow, whose back happened to be turned, much against his will Carruthers was sure, to let her tell him about herself and her life. She was too defenceless. She was a child, who would talk to any stranger who was kind; and he could guess all he was entitled to know, he could see for himself the gift she held in her hands,

the supreme gift for a woman, the gift beyond all others in power for the brief time it lasted, and he could see she was entirely unconscious of its value, of what might be done with it if only she knew how. And every time she opened her touchingly beautiful mouth of quick smiles and painstaking response, her h's dropped about him in showers.

Well, who cared ? She might say anything she liked, and it wouldn't matter ; in any voice, with any accent, and it wouldn't matter. Not even if she said coy common things, or arch common things, as he half expected she would when first she spoke and startled him with the discovery of her class, would it matter, For one needn't listen. One could always just sit and watch. Yes—who cared ?

But the answer to that, he knew, wasn't simply Nobody, it was Jocelyn Luke. Luke would care. He quite obviously did care already, though they couldn't have been married more than two or three weeks ; and she dumbly felt it, Carruthers was sure, for, after having been eager to get out of her imprisoning shell of illiteracy and say what she could while she was alone with him, directly Luke joined them she retired into a kind of anxious caution, looking at him before she said anything in answer to a question, and keeping as much as possible to Yes and No.

' He's been teaching her,' thought Carruthers. ' He's been going for her h's. She's on his nerves, and she knows it—no, not knows it, but feels it. She doesn't *know* anything about anything yet, but she feels a jolly lot, I'll swear.'

Deeply interesting Lukes. What would their fate be, he wondered.

§

After Carruthers had gone, pensively driving himself back to St. Mawes in the pale spring twilight, Jocelyn, soothed by his agreeable talk and manifest friendliness, and also by the good tea, felt quite different. He no longer wanted to admonish Sally. He didn't even want to ask her why she had come out of the bedroom. He was ashamed of that; ashamed of having locked her in, degrading her to God knew what level of childishness, of slavery, of, indeed, some pet animal that might stray—in fact, a dog. He shuddered a little, and looked at her deprecatingly, and leaning over the table took her hand and kissed it.

'Sally,' he murmured, suddenly for the first time since he grew up, feeling very young,—and how painfully young to be married!

Marriage. It wasn't just love-making, he thought as he kissed her hand; love-making, and then done with it and get on with your work. It was responsibility constant and lasting, not only for the other life so queerly and suddenly and permanently joined on to one, but also for oneself in a quite new way, a way one had never till then at all considered.

He kissed her hand again.

'Tea done 'im good,' thought Sally.

But it was the half hour with one of his own kind, and one who, while definitely charming to him, yet so obviously and with a kind of reverence admired Sally, that had done him good. It had restored him to a condition of tranquillity, and he felt more normal, more really happy—he didn't count his moments of wild rapture as happiness, because they somehow weren't—than he had

done since the days, now so curiously far away, before he had met her. Carruthers had reassured him. His behaviour to Sally had immensely reassured him. The world was, after all, chiefly decent. It didn't consist solely of foul-minded Cupps, nor of impudent young men in garages. Just as there were more people in it healthy than sick, so there were more people in it who were appreciative and kindly than there were people who weren't. Carruthers had known all about him, too. Jocelyn hadn't credited Oxford with so much intelligent awareness. It was infinitely pleasant, after a fortnight with Sally who, wonderful as she was, uniquely wonderful he freely admitted, yet hadn't the remotest idea of what he had done and still hoped to do—yes, by God, still hoped to do. Why not? Why chuck Cambridge after all? Why not face it with Sally, and train her who was, he knew, most obedient and only needing showing, to behave in such a way that no one, if she lived there, would dare make himself a nuisance?—it was infinitely pleasant after this to have been with somebody who knew all about him. He hadn't got very far, of course, in his work; nobody knew that better than himself. But it had been a good enough beginning for Carruthers and Oxford to have heard of him. And the desire to go on, to proceed along the glorious path, came back to him in a mighty flood as he sat in the Thistle and Goat's drawing-room, with that other desire appeased and seeming to be getting ready to fall into its proper place.

If Sally too could be got into her proper place, mightn't life even yet be a triumph?

§

He wrote to his mother that night, after Sally had gone to bed. He sent her there early, and with a return of irritability, because of the way the people in the dining-room at dinner, and afterwards in the drawing-room where he and she sat in a remote corner while he had his coffee, behaved. It was really outrageous. This was his first experience of dining with her in a public place. And it was no good his glaring at the creatures, because they never gave him so much as a glance.

So he sent her to bed, and then he wrote to his mother. Better go home. Better now go home to South Winch, and not wander about in expensive hotels, with hateful old men in dinner jackets and fat women in beads staring their eyes out. Hotels were impossible with Sally; and so were lodgings, with the risk of another suspicious and insulting landlady. Besides, a fortnight was enough for a honeymoon, and for this particular honeymoon, with all its difficulties, quite enough. Home was the place. Almond Tree Cottage, and its quiet. He wanted to go home. He wanted to go home to his mother, and get her meeting with Sally over, and sit in that little study of his at the top of the house where not a soul could see him, and think out what was best to do next.

His mother would help him. She had always understood and helped. Never yet had she failed him. And she would help him, too, in the business of looking after Sally,—take her off his hands sometimes, and perhaps succeed in getting her quite soon to talk like a civilised being.

It had been the last thing he had originally intended,

to go with Sally to stay at his mother's. Introduce her, of course ; take her down for a day ; but not stay there, for well did he know his marriage would fall like a sword on his mother, cleaving her heart. Things, however, had changed since then. He had in his haste, in his blind passion, written to her that he was going to chuck Cambridge, and now that his passion was no longer blind and he wasn't going to chuck it—no, he'd be damned if he would ; not anyhow till he had tried what it was like there with Sally—he was anxious to go to his mother and heal up at least one of the wounds he knew his letter must have made. He would ask her what she thought, having seen Sally, of the idea of her living in Cambridge. Perhaps—it flashed into his mind like light—his mother would live there too ; give up Almond Tree Cottage, and live with them in Cambridge. What a solution. Then she could look after Sally, and be such a comfort, such a blessed comfort, to him as well. What a splendid, simple solution.

He threw down his pen, and stared straight in front of him. They would all be happy then—he going on with his work, Sally being taught by his mother, and his mother not separated from him.

When he went to bed, and Sally stirred in her sleep as if she were waking up, he took her in his arms and asked her if she would like to live in Cambridge.

'Yes,' murmured Sally, even though half asleep remembering to stick to monosyllables.

'It'll be better than London,' said Jocelyn, holding her close. 'Won't it, my love ? Won't it, my *beautiful* love ? ' he added in a whisper, for there was something about Sally's hair, against which his face was, a softness, a sweetness . . .

'And perhaps my mother will come and live with us too there. You'd like that, wouldn't you, darling?'

There was a brief pause. Then, 'Yes,' murmured Sally.

He kissed her delicious hair. 'Darling,' he said tenderly, pleased by this absence of all difficulty. 'You're half asleep,' he added in her ear, pushing aside the hair that lay over it with his mouth.

But was she? For, after another pause, she said, her face still turned away from him, something that sounded like Father.

'Yes, darling?' said Jocelyn, as she didn't go on.

''E might come too, p'raps,' murmured Sally.

'What?' said Jocelyn, not sure he could have heard right, bending his face nearer. 'Your father?'

'Yes,' murmured Sally.

'Your *father*?' said Jocelyn again.

'Yes,' murmured Sally. 'Then—we'd be tidy like—you'd 'ave 'er, and I'd 'ave 'im.'

'Go to sleep Sally,' said Jocelyn with sudden authority. 'Do you know what time it is? Nearly eleven.'

VIII

§

Meanwhile, at Almond Tree Cottage, Jocelyn's mother had become Margery to Mr. Thorpe, and he to her was Edgar.

The idea she had played with, the possibility she had smiled at, was now fact. She had reacted to Jocelyn's marriage by getting involved, immediately and profoundly, in Mr. Thorpe. Without quite knowing how, with hardly a recollection of when, she had become engaged to him. He had caught her at the one moment in which, blind with shock, she would have clung to anything that offered support.

How could she face South Winch without support? For there was not only her inward humiliation to be dealt with, the ruin of her love and pride and the wreck of those bright ambitious dreams—surely of all ambitious dreams the most natural and creditable, the dreams of a mother for the future greatness of her son,—there was the pity of South Winch. No, she couldn't stand pity; and pity because of Jocelyn, of all people! Of him who had been her second, more glorious self, of him who was to have been all she would have been if she could have been. South Winch couldn't pity her if she married its richest man. There was something about wealth, when present in sufficient quantities, that silenced even culture;

and everybody knew about Mr. Thorpe's house, and grounds, and cars, and conservatories. She therefore dropped like a fruit that no longer has enough life to hold on, into the outstretched hands of Mr. Thorpe.

Jocelyn didn't want her; Mr. Thorpe did. It was a deplorable thing, she thought, for she could still at intervals, in spite of her confusion and distress, think intelligently, that a woman couldn't be happy, couldn't be at peace, unless there existed somebody who wanted her, and wanted her exclusively; but there it was. Deplorable indeed, for it now flung her into Mr. Thorpe's arms prematurely, without her having had time properly to think it out. No doubt she would have got into them in the end, but not yet, not for years and years. Now she tumbled in from a sheer instinct of self-preservation. She had to hold on to some one. She was giddy and staggering from the blow that had cut through her life. Jocelyn, her boy, her wonderful, darling boy, in whose career she had so passionately merged herself, doing everything, even the smallest thing, only with reference to him, wanted her so little that he could throw her aside, thrust her away without an instant's hesitation, and with her his whole future, the future he and she had been working at with utter concentration for years, for the sake of a girl he had only known a fortnight. He said so in the letter. He said it was only a fortnight. One single fortnight, as against those twenty-two consecrated years.

Who was this girl, who was this person for whom he gave up everything at a moment's notice? Mrs. Luke, shuddering, hid in Mr. Thorpe's arms; for the things that Jocelyn hadn't said in that letter on the eve of his marriage were more terrible almost to her than those he

had said,—the ominous non-reference to the girl's family, to her upbringing, to her circumstances. Hardly had he mentioned her name. At the end, in a postcript, as if in his heart he were ashamed, he had said it was Salvatia—Salvatia !—and her father's name was Pinner, but that he really didn't know that it mattered, and he wouldn't have cared, and neither would anybody else who saw her care, if she hadn't had fifty names. And then he had added the strange words, ominously defiant, unnecessarily coarse, that he would have taken her, and so would any one else who saw her, in her shift ; and then still further, and still more strangely and coarsely, he had scribbled in a shaky hand, as though he had torn open the letter again and stuck it in in a kind of frenzy of passion, ' My God—her shift ! '

Mrs. Luke hid in Mr. Thorpe's arms. Coarseness had never yet got into Almond Tree Cottage, except the coarseness consecrated by time, which it was a sign of intelligence not to mind, the coarseness, for instance, of those marvellous Elizabethans. But coarseness from Jocelyn ? Oh, blind and mad, blind and mad. Where had her boy got it from, this capacity for sudden, violent, ruinous behaviour ? Not from her, very certainly. It must be some of the thick, sinister blood filtered down into him from the Spanish woman her husband's great-grandfather—Mrs. Luke had been pleased with this great-grandfather up to then, because in her own family, where there should have been four, there hadn't been any—had married against his parents' wishes. She hid in Mr. Thorpe's arms. But—' This in exchange for Jocelyn ? ' she couldn't help repeating to herself that first day, trying to shut her eyes, spiritually as well as physically, trying to withdraw her attention, as even in

this crisis she remembered Dr. Johnson had done in unpleasant circumstances, from Mr. Thorpe's betrothal caresses.

Mr. Thorpe was clean and healthy; for that she was thankful. Still, she suffered a good deal that first day. Then, imperceptibly, she got used to him. Surprising how soon one gets used to a man, she thought, on whom this one's substantial shape had made a distinctly disagreeable impression the first week she found herself up against it. By the end of a week she no longer noticed the curious springy solidity of Mr. Thorpe's figure, which had seemed to her when he first embraced her, used as she was to the lean fragility of her late husband, so unpleasantly much. And besides, the flood of his riches began to flow over her immediately, and it was a warm flood. She hadn't known how agreeable such a flood could be. She hadn't had an idea of the way it could bring comfort into one's every corner—yes, even into one's mind when one's mind was sore and unhappy. Riches, she had always held, were vulgar; but she now obscurely recognised that they were only vulgar if they were somebody else's. One's own—why, to what noble ends could not riches be directed in the hands of those who refused to use them vulgarly? Married to Mr. Thorpe, she would make of them as beautiful and graceful a thing as she had made of her poverty. And it did soothe Mrs. Luke, it did help her a great deal during these days of wreckage, that her life, which had been so spare and bony, was now becoming hourly, in every sort of pleasant way, more and more padded, more and more soft and luscious with fat.

For, if no longer precious to Jocelyn, she was precious to Mr. Thorpe, and it was his pride to pad out the meagre-

ness of her surroundings; and though she cried herself to sleep each night because of Jocelyn, she awoke each morning comforted because of Mr. Thorpe. After twelve hours of not seeing Mr. Thorpe she could clearly perceive, what was less evident at the end of a long evening with him, her immense good fortune in having got him. A decent, honourable man. Not every woman in the forties finds at the precise right moment a decent, honourable man, who is also rich. Where would she have been now without Mr. Thorpe? He was her rock, her refuge; he was the plaster to her wounded pride, the restorer of her self-respect.

'I can *rely* on him,' she said to herself while she sat in front of her glass in the morning, brushing her thick, black hair—in the evening when she brushed it she didn't say anything. 'I can entirely *trust* him. What, after all, is education? What has education done for Jocelyn? The one thing that matters is character.'

And she would come down to find her breakfast-table strewn with fresh evidences of Mr. Thorpe's hot-houses and love.

§

Not a word from Jocelyn all this time, not a sign. He might be dead, she thought; and it would have hurt her less if he had been. For dead he would have been for ever hers; nobody then could touch him, take him away. Crushed and bitter, she crept yet closer to Mr. Thorpe. He liked it. He liked being crept close to. He was thoroughly pleased with what in his business-like mind he referred to as his bargain.

She never mentioned Jocelyn to him, and he liked that too. 'Young fool,' he said, when he came round

unexpectedly early one evening, and found her crying. 'No use worrying about a fool.'

And Mrs. Luke, still further crushed by hearing Jocelyn called a fool, and therefore being forced to the deduction that she had produced one—yes, and it was true, too, in spite of his brains—could only hang on to Mr. Thorpe, and say nothing.

He liked that. He liked to be hung on to, and he had no objection to a certain amount of saying nothing in a woman. Her late husband, could he now have seen her who was once his wife, would have been surprised, for in his day she had never hung on, and had been particularly good at conversation. But there was that about Mr. Thorpe which quenched conversation. Even before her engagement, in the days of his preliminary assiduities after his wife's death, she had found it difficult, when he came round, to keep what she understood was sometimes described as the ball rolling; and she was completely in command of herself then, in the full flood of her happiness and satisfaction. Conversation with him, the kind she and South Winch knew and practised, was out of the question. There was no exchange of opinions possible with Mr. Thorpe, because he never exchanged his, he merely emitted them and stuck to them. And they came out clothed in so very few words that they seemed to Mrs. Luke, watching him with quizzical, amused eyes—ah, those detached days, when one looked on and wasn't involved!—almost indecently bare. Now she drooped. She bowed her head.

Mr. Thorpe liked that. He liked a woman to bow her head. Gentleness in a woman was what he liked: gentleness, and softness, and roundness. Margery was gentle all right, and soft enough in places—anyhow of

speech; but she wasn't round. Not yet. Later, of course, after the cook at Abergeldie—his house was called Abergeldie—had had a go at her, she wouldn't know herself again. And meanwhile, to put an immediate stop to all this underfeeding, a stream of nourishment —oysters, lobsters, plovers' eggs, his own pineapples, his own forced strawberries, his own butter and fresh eggs, and, once, a sucking pig—thickly flowed across the daisied meadow dividing Abergeldie from Almond Tree Cottage.

The little maid turned yellow, and began to get up at night and be sick. Mrs. Luke, feeling it was both wrong and grotesque to bury lobsters in the back garden, and unable either to stop the stream or deal with it herself, was forced to send most of the stuff round to her friends; and so South Winch became aware of what had happened, for nobody except Mr. Thorpe grew pineapples and bought plovers' eggs, and nobody gave such quantities of them to a woman without being going to marry her afterwards.

Well, it was as good a way as any other of letting people know, thought Mrs. Luke, sitting in silence with Mr. Thorpe's arm round her waist, while every now and then he furtively felt to see whether she wasn't beginning anywhere to curve. Instead of sending round *billets de faire part* she sent lobsters. Rather original, she thought, with a slight return to her detached and amused earlier self. 'Does he really think I can eat them all?' she wondered.

And the little maid, in whose kitchen much, even so, remained, fell from one bilious paroxysm into another.

§

She was warmly congratulated. It soothed her afresh, this new importance with which she was instantly clothed. Money—she sighed, but faced it—money, even in that place where people really did try to keep their eyes well turned to the light, was a great, perhaps the greatest, power. She sighed. It oughtn't to be so; but if it was so? And who would not be grateful, really deeply grateful, to Edgar, and put up with all his little ways, when he was so generous, so kind, and so completely devoted? Besides, his little ways would, she was sure, later on become much modified. A wife could do so much. A well-bred, intelligent wife—it was simply silly not to admit plain facts—could do everything. When she was married . . .

And then she found herself shrinking from the thought of when she was married. She could restrain his affection now; it was her privilege. But when she was married, it would be his privilege not to be able to be restrained. And there appeared to be no age limit to a man's affectionateness. Here was Edgar, well over sixty and still affectionate. Really, really, thought Mrs. Luke, who even in her most ardent days had loved only with her mind.

And then one evening, nearly three weeks after the arrival of that letter of Jocelyn's that had brought all this about, Mr. Thorpe said, 'When's it going to be?'

'When is what going to be?' she asked, starting.

To this he only replied, 'Coy, eh?' and sat staring at her proudly and affectionately, a hand on each knee.

Pierced by the word, Mrs. Luke hastened to say in her

most level voice, 'You mean our marriage? Surely there's plenty of time.'

'Time, eh? You bet there isn't. Not for you and me. We're no chickens, either of us.'

Mrs. Luke winced. She had never at any time tried, or wished, or pretended to be a chicken, yet to be told she wasn't one was strangely ruffling. It it were a question of chickens, compared with Edgar she certainly was one. These things were relative. But what a way of . . .

And then, as before, the little maid came in with a letter, and Mr. Thorpe, vexed as before by the interruption (why that servant—well, one could hardly call a thing that size a servant; that aproned spot, then—couldn't leave letters outside till they were wanted . . .), said, curbing himself, 'Letter, eh?'

'From Jocelyn,' said Mrs. Luke, who had flushed a bright flame-colour, and whose hands, as they held the letter, were shaking.

'Thought so,' said Mr. Thorpe in disgust.

§

He learned with profound disapproval that Jocelyn was bringing his bride to Almond Tree Cottage. He didn't want brides about—none, that is, except his own; and he feared this precious son of hers, who had behaved to her about as badly as a son could behave, would distract Margery's attention from her own affairs, and make her even more coy about fixing the date of her wedding than she already was.

'Going to sponge on you,' was his comment.

She shrank from the word.

'Jocelyn isn't like that,' she said quickly.

'Pooh,' said Mr. Thorpe.

She shrank from this word too. Edgar was, as she well knew and quite accepted, a plain man and a rough diamond, but a man shouldn't be too plain, a diamond shouldn't be too rough. Besides, surely the expression was obsolete.

'My dear Edgar,' she protested gently.

Mr. Thorpe persisted. 'It's pooh all right,' he said. 'Young men with wives in their shifts'—he remembered every word of that first letter—'and only five hundred a year to keep them on, always sponge. Or try to,' he said, instinctively closing his hands over his pockets. 'Got to live, you know. Must stay somewhere.'

'He is going to live in London,' said Mrs. Luke. 'You remember he said so in his first letter. Live there and do—do literary work.'

'Bunkum,' said Mr. Thorpe.

And this word seemed to her even more obsolete, if possible, than pooh.

But there was no time to worry about words. What was she going to do? Where was she going to put Jocelyn and his wife? How was she going to receive them? Had she better pretend to South Winch that she had known nothing about it till they had appeared on her doorstep and overwhelmed her with the news? Had she better pretend that Jocelyn had given up Cambridge because he had been offered a position in London too good to refuse? Or had she better hide them indoors till they had found rooms in London, and could be got away again without having been seen, and meanwhile go on behaving as if nothing had happened?

She lost her head. Standing there, with the letter in her shaking hands and Mr. Thorpe, who wouldn't go

away, squarely in front of her, she lost her practical, cool head, and simply couldn't think what to do. One thing alone was clear—she was going to suffer. And presently another thing emerged into clearness, an absurd thing, but curiously difficult and unpleasant,—she had no spare-room, and in Jocelyn's room was only the little camp bed it had pleased him (and her too, who liked to think of him as Spartan), to sleep in. This was no house for more than just herself and Jocelyn. Oh, why hadn't she married Mr. Thorpe at once? Then she would have been established at Abergeldie by now, and able to let the pair have Almond Tree Cottage to themselves.

Abergeldie. The word brought light into her confusion. Of course. That was where they must go. Abergeldie, majestic in the size and number of its unused spare-rooms, magnificent in its conveniences, its baths, its staff of servants. She had been taken over it, as was fitting; had waded across the thickness of its carpets, admired its carved wardrobes, marble-topped washstands and immense beds, gazed from its numerous windows at its many views, wilted through its hot-houses, ached along its lawns, and knew all about it. The very place. And, given courage by the knowledge of the impossibility of housing more than one person beside herself in her own house, urged on by the picture in her mind of that tiny room upstairs and its narrow bed, she made her suggestion to Mr. Thorpe.

Nervously she made it, fearing that the reason for it, fearing that the merest most passing mention of such a thing as a bed, would bring out the side of him which she was forced to recognise as ribald. And it did. He said all the things she was so sorry to have been obliged

to expect he would. But he was good-natured; he liked to feel he was helping Margery out of a fix. Also, the young fool would be away from his mother then, and perhaps some sense could be got into his head, and at the same time as sense was got in nonsense would be got out,—the nonsense, for instance, of no doubt supposing that he, Edgar Thorpe, was the sort of man who could be sponged upon beyond, say, a couple of days. Besides, he was proud of Abergeldie, and hardly anybody, what with first Annie's being alive and then with her not being alive, had ever seen it.

So it was settled, and he went away earlier than usual to give his orders to the housekeeper; and Mrs. Luke, creeping into bed with a splitting headache, lay for hours staring at nothing, and trying to forget Mr. Thorpe's last words.

For, after he had most affectionately embraced her, so affectionately that she was sure one of her tendons had snapped, he had said: 'No good his trying to milk *me*, you know.'

Milk him?

She lay staring into the dark. Was character, after all, better than education?

§

The Canon said it was, and so did his wife. In fact at tea next day in Mrs. Luke's little garden, on that bit of lawn round the cedar, near the low fence across which grazed Mr. Thorpe's Jersey cows, they all three were unanimous that it was. Wonderful how daylight, ordinary things, meals, tea-cups, callers, dispelled doubts.

'Better to have both, of course,' said the Canon, eating Mr. Thorpe's forced strawberries after covering

them with the cream that had been, twenty-four hours earlier, inside those very cows, 'but if that's not possible, give me character. It's what *tells*. It's the only thing that in the long run *tells*.'

'Oh, well—one isn't seriously disputing it,' said Mrs. Luke. 'Only these theories, if one presses them——'

She paused, and poured out more tea for Mrs. Walker.

'For instance,' she went on, 'suppose a man had a cook of a completely admirable nature. If he married her, could he be happy? I mean, an educated man. Let us say a very *well* educated man.'

'Certainly, if she cooked nicely,' said the Canon, who thought he scented rather than saw the form of Mr. Thorpe lurking somewhere at the back of his delightful parishioner's remarks, and wasn't going to be caught.

He knew the importance of turning away seriousness, when it cropped up at the wrong moment, with a laugh. A man as valuably rich as Mr. Thorpe shouldn't be taken too seriously, shouldn't be examined and pulled about. His texture simply wouldn't stand it. He should be said grace over, thought the Canon, who fully realised what a precious addition Mr. Thorpe's wealth in Mrs. Luke's hands was going to be to South Winch, and gobbled up thankfully. Gobbled up; not turned over first on the plate.

Mrs. Luke hadn't invited the Walkers to tea. On the contrary, when first they appeared at the back door, ushered through it by the little maid who each time she saw the Canon's gaiters was thrown by them into a fresh convulsion of respectfulness, she had been annoyed. Because all day long she had been vainly trying to collect and arrange her thoughts, soothe her nerves,

prepare her mind for the evening, when Jocelyn had said he would arrive—to supper, he wrote, somewhere round eight o'clock,—and define what her attitude was going to be both to him and to the girl with the utterly ridiculous Christian name; and not having one bit succeeded, and impelled by some vague hope that out of doors she might find quiet, that in Nature she might find tranquillity and composure, had said she would have tea in the garden.

Nature never did betray the heart that loved her. . . .

Some idea like that, though she wasn't at all a Wordsworthian and regarded him at best with indulgence, drove her out to what her corner of South Winch held of Nature,—the bit of lawn, the cedar, the Kerria japonica against the wall by the kitchen window, the meadow across the railing, full of daisies and cows, and, on that fine spring afternoon of swift shadows and sunshine, the wind, fresh and sweet with the scent of young leaves.

But once the Walkers were there she found they did her good. They distracted her. And they liked her so much. It was always pleasant and restoring to be with people who liked one. The Canon made her feel she was good-looking and important, and his wife made her feel she was important. Also, they helped with the strawberries, from which, after a fortnight of them at every meal, she had for some time turned away her eyes. Later on, when she was alone again, there would still be at least a couple of hours to decide in what sort of a way she would meet Jocelyn; quite long enough, seeing how she couldn't, whenever she thought of the meeting, stop herself from trembling.

Oh, he had behaved outrageously to her—to her, his

mother, who had given up her life to him. There had been men in past years she might have married, men of her own age and class, by whom she might have had other children and with whom she might have been happy all this time; and she had turned them down, dismissed them ruthlessly because of Jocelyn, because only Jocelyn, and his gifts and career, were to have her love and devotion. Wasn't it a shame, wasn't it a shame to treat her so? To behave to her as though she were his enemy, the kill-joy who mustn't be told and mustn't be consulted, who must be kept in the dark, shut out? And why, because he had gone mad about a girl, must he go still more mad, and ruin himself by throwing up Cambridge?

A wave of fresh misery swept over her. 'Go on talking—*please*,' she said quickly, when the Walkers, replete, fell momentarily silent.

They looked up surprised; and they were still more surprised when they saw that her face, usually delicately pale, was quite red, and her eyes full of tears.

The Canon was affectionately concerned, and his wife was concerned.

'Are you not well, dear Mrs. Luke?' she inquired.

'My *dear* friend,' said the Canon, setting down his cup, tidying his mouth, and taking her hand. 'My dear, *dear* friend—what is it?'

Then, impulsively, she told them. 'It's Jocelyn,' she said. 'He's married, and given up Cambridge.'

And all her mortification and bitter unhappiness engulfed her, and she began helplessly to cry.

'Dear, dear. Dear me. Dear, dear me,' said the Canon.

'Dear Mrs. Luke——' said his wife.

They sat impotently looking on. Such excessive weeping from the poised, the unemotional, the serene Mrs. Luke, was most disconcerting. One shouldn't expose oneself like that, however unhappy one was, thought the Canon's wife, feeling terribly uncomfortable; and even the Canon had a sensation he didn't like, as of fig-leaves being wrenched off and flung aside.

Well, having behaved like this—really her nerves had completely gone—there was nothing left but to explain further, and after a few painful moments of trying to gulp herself quiet she told them all about it.

They were horrified. Jocelyn's behaviour, to the Walkers who had ripening sons of their own, seemed to the last degree disgraceful. That the girl was some one to be ashamed of was very plain, or why should he have come down voluntarily from Cambridge? Marriage by itself didn't stop a student from continuing there. He was ruined. He would never be anything now. And as representing South Winch, which had not yet in its history produced a distinguished man, the Canon felt this blighting of its hopes that some day it would be celebrated as the early home of Sir Jocelyn Luke, perhaps of Lord Luke—why not? hadn't there been Kelvin?—very keenly.

Poor mother. Poor, poor mother.

The Canon took her hand, and, raising it reverently to his lips, kissed it. His wife didn't mind this, because in sorrow, as in sickness, there is no sex. Nobody enjoys kissing the hand of the sick. She minded nothing the Canon did so long as he didn't enjoy it.

'Yes—and he's bringing her here to-night,' gasped Mrs. Luke, struggling to keep down a fresh outburst.

'Here? Bringing her here? Without first asking

your permission and forgiveness?' cried the Canon. 'Disgraceful. Outrageous. Unpardonable.'

'Oh, *isn't* it, *isn't* it——' wept Mrs. Luke into her handkerchief.

Never, never could she forgive Jocelyn. No, she never, never would. Let him manage for himself now. Let him lie as best he could on the miserable bed he had made. She would tell him so plainly, and though she couldn't help his coming there that night she would insist that he should go away again next morning and never, never come back. . . .

And then, over the top of her handkerchief, she saw him standing there, standing in the back-door looking at her: Jocelyn; the light of her eyes; the only thing really in her life.

'Jocelyn—oh, *Jocelyn*!'

She gave a kind of sobbing sigh; she struggled to her feet; she stood, swaying a moment, holding on to the table; and then simply ran to him.

§

'Mother——'

'Oh—*Jocelyn*!'

He hugged her tighter than he had ever hugged her. He was raised quite outside his ordinary self, in this joy of getting back to her. And that she should run into his arms—she who never ran, who never showed emotion!

'You're not angry, Mother?' he asked, looking down at her upturned face, still wet and red from her recent weeping.

'Dreadfully,' she said, smiling up at him, the strangest transfigured, watery smile.

'Oh, Mother—I knew you wouldn't fail me!' he cried, infinitely relieved, infinitely melted and grateful.

'Fail you?'

'Oh, Mother——'

And they hugged again. His mother's love was a miracle. Her voice was an enchantment. Just to hear the words, the precious right words, said in the precious right voice. . . .

At the tea-table the Canon and his wife, who carefully didn't look but yet saw, were much shocked. This surely amounted to having duped them as to her real feelings, to having got their sympathy and concern on false pretences.

'Hadn't we better go home, John?' Mrs. Walker inquired of her husband.

'Much better,' said the Canon, who didn't see how to do it.

He looked about for a way of escape.

There wasn't one, except by climbing over to the cows, and that would involve them in trespass. Besides, retreat should be dignified.

'But where——?' Mrs. Luke was whispering, her cheek against Jocelyn's, while with one hand she still clung hold of his neck. 'Salvatia——?'

'In the sitting-room,' whispered Jocelyn. 'I put her there. I wanted to see you first alone. Why on earth those Walkers are here to-day of all days——'

He glanced at the scene on the lawn, where the Canon and his wife, marooned at the untidy tea-table, were trying to seem absorbed in something that wasn't happening up above their heads in the branches of the cedar.

'You said supper-time——'

'But I scorched to get to you quickly——'

'Then you wanted me?'

'Oh, Mother!'

And he hugged her again, and the Walkers looked about again for a way of escape, and again found none.

Sweet, sweet, delicious beyond dreams, was this restoration to all, to far more than all that had been apparent before, of her boy's need of her, and of his love. If this was the effect being married had on him, then she was glad he had married. How could she be angry with a wife who brought him closer than ever, more utterly than ever, back to his mother? So, she thought, must the Prodigal Son's father have felt about the swine his boy had had such a dose of. He wouldn't have resented them; he must have quite liked them.

'You'll try and love her, won't you, Mother?' said Jocelyn. 'She is—very lovable.'

And taking his mother by the hand, he led her to the sitting-room.

§

There stood the exquisite Sally; stood, because she was afraid to sit. Round her slender body she held tightly the new wrap Jocelyn, among other things, had bought her on their way through London and had instructed her to keep on till he told her to take it off. It was grey, so as to make her as invisible as possible, and was of the kind that has neither sleeves nor fastenings; and Sally, who had never been inside a thing like that before, clutched it with anxious obedience about her with both hands.

Extravagantly slender in this garment, which took

on as if by magic the most delicious folds directly it got hold of Sally, and too lovely to be credible, she stood there, her lips parted in fright, and her eyes fixed on the entering Mrs. Luke.

'*Oh*——' said Mrs. Luke, catching her breath, who had read poetry, who had heard music, who knew what April mornings in the woods are like, when the sun shines through windflowers and the birds are wild with young delight.

Sally's knees shook. She clutched the grey wrap tighter still about her. Mr. Luke's mother was so terribly like Mr. Luke. Two of them. She hadn't bargained for two of them. And she was worse than he was, because she was a lady. Gentlemen were difficult enough, but they did every now and then cast themselves at one's feet and make one feel one could do what one liked for a bit, but a lady wouldn't; a lady would always stay a lady.

The word struck cold on Sally's heart. What did one do with a lady? And a lady, too, who seemed hardly older than her son, and as wide-awake and sharp as you please, Sally was sure. She had been imagining Jocelyn's mother old and stout and whitehaired, and perhaps not able to see or hear very well, and therefore comfortingly slow to mark what was done amiss. And here was this thin, quick, almost young lady. No flies on *her* for dead certain, thought Sally, clutching her wrap.

Her heart, which felt as if it had already sunk as far as it could go, contrived to sink still farther. She stared at Mrs. Luke with the fascinated fear of a rabbit confronted by a snake; but her stare, which felt inside just as ugly and scared as that, was outside the most beautiful

little look of gracious shyness, and Mrs. Luke, staring back, was for a moment quite unable to speak.

Who was this? Had Jocelyn caught and married some marvellous daughter of a patrician house? Had he been up to Olympus, and netted the young Aphrodite as, on that morning of roses, she stepped ashore from her shell?

She flushed scarlet. The perfect grace and youth, the dream-like loveliness . . .

'Why,' she murmured under her breath, 'how *beautiful*——' and took a step forward, and held out both her hands.

'Are you really my new daughter?' she said in a low voice. 'You?'

With a great effort Sally managed to stand her ground, and not shrink away backwards before this alarming figure. She didn't know what to do about the held out hands, because if she let go of the wrap so as to shake them it would fall off, and Jocelyn had said she was on no account to let it do that.

She therefore stood motionless, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

Mrs. Luke came close. 'You wonderful child—*you're* Salvatia?' she murmured.

With a great effort Sally continued to hold her ground; with a great effort she unclove her tongue.

'That's right,' she said, clutching her grey wrap.

Two words; but enough. How many times had not Jocelyn told her not to say That's right? But he had told her not to say nearly everything; she couldn't possibly remember all the things she wasn't to say, however hard she tried. Indeed, Sally in her flustered soul was thinking what a mercy it was she hadn't added

'mum.' It had been on the tip of her tongue, faced by a lady, and she had hung on to it just in time.

Mrs. Luke, startled, was arrested for an instant in her advance. Then, not after all quite certain that she had heard what she had heard—it seemed impossible that she should have—she went close up to Sally and kissed her. She had to reach up to her for Sally was half a head the taller, besides being rigid with fright.

'Sally, kiss my mother and make friends,' said Jocelyn.

'Yes, Mr. Luke——' said Sally, making a quick downward lunge of her head.

'Now, Sally——*please*,' protested Jocelyn. 'She can't,' he added, turning to his mother, 'get used to calling me by my Christian name.'

'Sorry,' said Sally; and felt so very warm that she had a queer conviction that even her stomach must be blushing.

Mrs. Luke stood looking at her, trying to smile. She now knew everything. No need for words from Jocelyn, for explanations. She knew, and she understood. Up to her to behave well; up to her to behave wonderfully, and make him more than ever certain there was no one in the whole world like his mother.

'She'll learn,' she said, smiling as best she could. 'Won't you—Salvatia?'

If only, thought Sally, she were back at Woodles; if only, only she were back safe and quiet with her father at Woodles.

'It was inevitable,' said Mrs. Luke, turning to Jocelyn. 'Absolutely inevitable.'

He caught hold of his mother's hands. That she should see that, that she should instantly understand. . . .

'And I congratulate you with all my heart, my dear son, and my dear daughter,' Mrs. Luke went on, continuing to be wonderful. 'You are both my dear, my very dear, children.'

And Jocelyn bent his head over her hand, and kissed it in a fervour of gratitude and relief.

And Sally, looking on at Usband in this new light, thought, 'Well, I'm blest.'

IX

§

Restored by the shock both of Sally's loveliness and language to her normal self, Mrs. Luke's tears dried up and her emotions calmed down, and she began to think rapidly and clearly.

This situation had to be dealt with. The only person who could deal with it with any hope at all of success was herself. She would, then, grasp it firmly, as if it were a nettle, and wear it proudly, as if it were a rose. Yes, that was the line to take : wear it proudly, as if it were a rose.

More clearly than if Jocelyn had explained for an hour she saw what had happened, what couldn't have helped happening, once chance had shown him Salvatia. From those few words of Sally's she reconstructed the Pinner family and its conditions, and as she stood gazing at her, with one hand still in Jocelyn's, she grouped the whole Pinner lot into the single word Gutter. Jocelyn had found and picked up beauty in a gutter. The gutter was as evident as the beauty, and as impossible to hide. Accept it, then ; accept it, and make South Winch accept it. Treat it as quaint, as amusing, as completely excused by the beauty. She had made South Winch accept Tiepolo, when it didn't in the least want to, and now see into what an enthusiasm it had lashed itself ! Even so would she make it accept

Salvatia ; and ceaselessly every hour, every minute, she herself would educate the girl, and train her patiently, and force her gently into proper ways of speech and behaviour. Seventeen, was she ? Mrs. Luke felt that with seventeen all things were possible. A child. Wax. And she was so really exquisite, so really perfect of form and colour and movement, that it would be wonderful to watch her development, her unfolding into at least the semblance of a lady.

Salvatia—' No, no, dearest Jocelyn—not Sally, not Sally,' she begged on his calling her that, for she had a theory that names had the power of making you be like them, and a Sally was foredoomed to unredeemable vulgarity—should have masters (perhaps mistresses would be better,) down from London, when once Mrs. Luke was married to Mr. Thorpe and could afford things ; regular teachers who would give her lessons at stated hours, while she herself would give her lessons at all the unstated ones. And she would take her everywhere, to each of the South Winch festivities, whether tea-parties, or debates, or lectures, or concerts or plays, and wherever she went Salvatia should be her open glory. It would be a mistake in tactics, besides being an impossibility, to try to hide her. She should be flaunted. For, confronted by a bull, Mrs. Luke remembered, quite the best thing to do was to take it by the horns.

So swiftly do thoughts gallop through minds like Mrs. Luke's that she had planned out her attitude in those few instants in the sitting-room, while she stood gazing at Sally and holding Jocelyn's hand.

' We're going to be *great* friends, are we not Salvatia ? ' she said, laying her free hand on her daughter-in-law's delicate little shoulder.

Great friends ? She and the lady ? The bare suggestion produced in Sally that physical condition known to the Pinner family as fit to drop.

Directly questioned, however, she was forced to answer, so she said faintly, ' Right O,' and Mrs. Luke, smiling elaborately and patting the shoulder, said, ' You very quaint little girl,'—and in spite of the obvious inappropriateness of these adjectives as a description of the noble young angel standing before her, she was determined that they should, roughly, represent her attitude towards her.

' Now we'll all have tea,' she said, suddenly becoming gaily business-like. These children—it was she who must take them in hand. No more emotions, she decided. Her beloved Jocelyn needed her help again, couldn't do without her. . . . ' Won't we, Jocelyn ? Won't we, Salvatia ? I've had some already, but I'll be greedy and have some more. Jocelyn, you go and tell Hammond ——' Hammond was the little maid's surname, and by it, to her great astonishment who knew herself only as Lizz, she had been called since she entered Mrs. Luke's service—' to make fresh tea and bring it in here. You must both be dying for it. And then you can say good-bye to the Walkers for me, Jocelyn, will you ? ' she called after him. ' Tell them I've got a most beautiful surprise for them—quite soon, perhaps to-morrow. *You're* the beautiful surprise, Salvatia,' she said, turning to Sally smilingly, who had made a sudden forward movement as if to follow Jocelyn, and who, on seeing him go out of the room and leave her alone with his mother, was so seriously alarmed that she again had a queer conviction about her stomach, but this time that it was turning what the Pinner family called as white as a sheet.

'Of course you know you're beautiful, don't you?' said Mrs. Luke, busily pulling out the little table the tea was to be put on in the absence of the proper table in the garden, and clearing Sir Thomas Browne off it, and also two bright tulips in a clear glass vessel. 'You must have heard that ever since you can remember.'

'But I can't *'elp* it,' said Sally, very anxious, her eyes on the door.

''Elp it? You quaint child. There's an h in help, Salvatia dear. Help it? But why should you want to? It's a wonderful gift, and you should thank God who gave it you, and use it entirely——' Mrs. Luke was quite surprised at her own words, for she wasn't at all religious, yet they came out glibly, and she concluded they were subconsciously inspired by the Canon in the garden—'entirely to His glory.'

'Yes, m——'

'No—stop there, stop there,' cried Mrs. Luke, quickly holding up her hand and smiling. 'You were going to say ma'am, were you not, Salvatia? Well, you mustn't. Not to me. Not to anybody. Except, of course,' she added, feeling she couldn't begin too soon to help the child, 'to the Queen, and other royal ladies.'

And before her eyes floated that vision she had so often contemplated of Sir Jocelyn Luke, of Lord Luke, and now was added to it Lady Luke, the lovely Lady Luke, being presented at Court, and by that time as perfect inside as out. Properly dealt with, Jocelyn's marriage, instead of being his ruin, might end by being one of his chief glories.

'Sit down, little girl.'

Sally dropped as if she were shot on to the nearest chair, which was Mrs. Luke's.

'Not there—not that one,' said Mrs. Luke, smiling. 'No, dear child—nor that one,' she added, as Sally having hastily got up again was about to drop on to the next nearest one, which was Jocelyn's—better get her into all the little ways at once. '*Any* chair, Salvatia dear, except just those two. Yes—that's a very comfortable one. Is not it too strange to think that this time yesterday you and I never had seen each other, and had no more idea——'

Sally, sitting down more cautiously on the edge of the third chair, didn't think that strange at all, but very natural and nice. There had been lots of yesterdays without the lady in them, and all of them had seemed quite natural. What really was strange was that they should have left off and landed her here, shut up alone with somebody so happily till then unknown. If only, thought Sally, she could now, having been introduced and that, go somewhere where the lady wasn't. For Mrs. Luke terrified her more than any one she had yet in her brief life come across. Worse, far worse, than her parents when, for her good, they used to give her What for, and worse even than Mr. Luke when he turned and just looked at her and didn't say anything after she had passed some remark, was this smiling lady who patted her. She couldn't take her eyes off Mrs. Luke, watching her with a fascinated apprehension, not knowing where she mightn't be going to be patted next.

Sitting sideways on the very edge of her chair, and still holding her wrap tightly about her, Sally's eyes followed Mrs. Luke's slightest movement. In any one else it would have been a stare, and Mrs. Luke would have explained that she mustn't, but there was nothing wrong to be found with the look in Sally's eyes,—nothing

wrong, indeed, to be found in anything she did, thought Mrs. Luke, arranging things comfortably for everybody's tea, so long as it wasn't speaking.

Mrs. Luke knew she was being watched, but only, so it seemed, with a lovely and gracious attentiveness. She also knew Sally was sitting on the edge of her chair, with her legs drawn up under her just as if she were trying to keep them out of something not quite nice ; but no need to disturb a position which somehow seemed sheer grace. What a pity, what a pity, flashed across Mrs. Luke's mind, that the child hadn't happened to be born dumb ! Was that wicked ? No, she didn't think so. She herself could imagine being very happy dumb, with plenty of books, and not having to talk to bores.

'Wouldn't you like to take your hat off, Salvatia ? ' she asked, drawing Jocelyn's chair closer to the little table.

Sally started. 'No thank you, please——' she said hastily.

'Do,' said Mrs. Luke. 'I want you to.'

'Yes, m—yes, Mrs. Luke,' said Sally, instantly obeying.

'Not Mrs. Luke, dear—Mother. You must call me Moth——'

Her voice died away, and she stood staring in silence. How wonderful. How really amazingly beautiful. Like sunsets. And the girl, crowned with that bright crown of waving light, like some royal child.

She stood staring, her hands dropped by her sides. 'What a *responsibility*,' she whispered.

'Pardon ? ' said Sally, nervously.

§

The Walkers were got rid of, and Jocelyn came back frowning. They had scolded him; him, who had been completely understood and unreproached by his mother, the one person with either a right or a grievance. Having known him since he was three didn't excuse them, he considered; and it seemed merely silly to rebuke him for leaving Cambridge when he wasn't going to leave it. He didn't attempt to enlighten them; he just stood and glowered, waiting till they should have done. What could old Walker know of the way one was forced to react to beauty? He had probably never set eyes on it in his life. And as for passionate love, the fiery love that had been burning him up for the last few weeks, one had only to look at Mrs. Walker to know he could never have felt that.

So he simply repeated, when the Canon paused a moment, that his mother had asked him to say good-bye for her, and then, this second time, he added, 'She can't come herself, because she is with my wife.'

'Conceited young monkey,' thought Mrs. Walker, who remembered him in petticoats, and even then giving himself airs. 'Wife, indeed.' Both Mrs. Walker's sons were without gifts.

'Your mother is an angel, sir,' said the Canon sternly.

'So is my wife,' said Jocelyn, glowering.

'No doubt, no doubt,' said the Canon, who didn't for a moment believe it. Angels weren't married in such a hurry. On the other hand, he was sure young devils frequently were. They got hold of one and made one. Jocelyn had been got hold of—lamentably, disastrously.

The Canon snatched up his hat. 'Come along, Margaret,' he said testily, squaring his shoulders.

And Margaret came along, and together they marched off into the house, along the passage, past the shut sitting-room door, accompanied by Jocelyn who showed them out in silence.

He had said no word of that pleasant part of his mother's message, that part about having a beautiful surprise for the Walkers, perhaps to-morrow, because he was annoyed with them, and they went away more indignant with him than before, besides feeling they had been treacherously treated by their hitherto dear friend, Mrs. Luke. And Mrs. Walker, when they were safely out in the road, said what a very disagreeable young man he had grown into, and the Canon said he hoped Mr. Thorpe would lick him into shape, and Jocelyn, all unconscious of Mr. Thorpe, went back frowning to his mother, who was in the act, when he opened the door, of stroking Sally's hair.

He forgot the tiresome Walkers, and his heart swelled with gratitude. That Sally should be taken at once to his mother's arms like this had been outside his wildest hopes. Indeed, he had had no hopes, no clear thoughts about it at all; he only, driven by weariness of the burden of complications Sally brought into the simplest things, had come back to his mother's feet as the Christian sinner, tired of or frightened by his sins, comes back to the feet of God. The analogy wasn't perfect, of course; Sally, so good and beautiful, couldn't be compared to sin. But he wanted to get back to his mother's feet, he had a tremendous, almost childish, longing to lie there and let her kick him if she chose. He had treated her badly. He well knew he deserved it. Let her do

anything in the way of rebuke and chastisement, if only he might lie there, he and his burden, safely cast down, both of them, at her feet. '*I will arise and go to my Mother*,' had floated frequently through his head as he set the bonnet of the Morris-Cowley eastward towards London and South Winch. Naturally he hadn't said it out loud. Sally was incapable of understanding even a simple reaction. This one, which was highly complicated, would have completely bewildered her. Besides, one can't well speak of a reaction to its cause.

But how happy was Jocelyn at the moment when he opened the door, and saw her and his mother in that attitude of mutual affection; how deeply relieved. The cords were loosened, the weight shifted. Here this calm room, with everything in it just right, just *so*—its restraints, its browns and ivories, its flashes of colour, its books, its one picture; and upstairs, up under the roof, his own attic waiting for him, with its promise of work to be resumed, to be carried on as it used to be in the tranquil, fruitful days before he met Sally.

Jocelyn stood a moment looking at the scene, smiling his rare smile because he was so content. How unlike the places he had suffered in since he last was here. How unlike the Pinner lair at the back of the shop, where he had burnt in torment, and the hideous dwelling of the Cupps, where he had been insulted, and the dingy expensiveness of the Thistle and Goat, and the other three or four cynically ugly and uncomfortable rooms through which he had trailed his passion. Impossible not to smile, not to laugh almost, with gladness at getting home again. He had, he knew, all his life loved his mother, but it seemed as if he hadn't loved her consciously till now, and he went quickly across to her and

put his arm about her, and said, 'Mother, you must never leave me. I can't do without you. *We* can't. When I go back to Cambridge—and of course I'm going back—you must come too. You're going to live with us there. Everything depends on you. All my future, all my happiness——'

And Sally, over whose head these words were being tossed, sitting very rigid, for Mrs. Luke's hand was still on her hair, and wholly unaccustomed to displays of family affection, once again said to herself, just for company's sake and to keep her courage up, 'Well, I'm blest.'

§

Mrs. Luke, however, was brought back by Jocelyn's words to a vivid sense of Mr. Thorpe. He had sunk aside in her mind during the emotions of the last half hour. He now became distinct; extremely distinct, and frightfully near. That very evening he would be coming round after supper—he had agreed that the meal itself should be given over to reunion—in order to collect his young guests.

Jocelyn, she knew, had no idea of his existence. Mr. Thorpe, though living in South Winch, had not till then been of it. His world had been different. His wealth had separated him, and his obvious disharmony—South Winch had only to look at him to perceive it—with the things of the spirit. Also, there had been his wife. So that if mentioned, which was rarely, it had merely been with vague uninterest as the rich man in the big house in Acacia Avenue.

Now he had to be mentioned, and Jocelyn's words made it difficult.

Mrs. Luke stood silent, her hand still on Sally's head, encircled by Jocelyn's arm, while he told her of the plans he had been making for the last two days, ever since it suddenly dawned on him that that was to be their future. How could she interrupt him with Mr. Thorpe? Yet Mr. Thorpe was, she was sure, the real solution. Salvatia was going to be expensive, very, if the gutter was to be properly scraped off her, and no further stretching could possibly be got out of her own income, while Jocelyn's, of course, would be all needed for Cambridge. Yes—Mr. Thorpe, who had begun by being a refuge, had now become a godsend. Jocelyn would see it himself, when he had had him properly explained.

But how difficult to explain him—now, with the sweet balm of her boy's dependence on her and his love being poured into her ears, her boy, who in his whole life hadn't shown so much of either as he had in the half hour since he came home. Yet it wasn't her fault, it was Jocelyn's. It was his marriage that had precipitated Mr. Thorpe into their lives. Still, she didn't blame Jocelyn, for no young man, let alone her imaginative, beauty-appreciating son, could have resisted Salvatia.

She stood silent, smiling nervously. To have to quench this happy hopefulness with Mr. Thorpe was most painful. She smiled more and more nervously. Apart from everything else, it embarrassed her, her coming marriage, it embarrassed her dreadfully, somehow, faced by her grown-up son. The memory of that almost snapped tendon last night . . . suppose Jocelyn were to think she was marrying Mr. Thorpe for anything but convenience, with anything but reluctance . . . suppose he were to take up a Hamlet-like attitude

to her, and think—he would never, she knew, say—rude things. . . .

'How delightful it all sounds,' she said at last, removing her hand from Sally's head, who at once felt better. 'Quite, quite delightful. But——'

'Now, Mother, there mustn't be any buts,' interrupted Jocelyn. 'It's all settled.' And rashly—but then he felt so happy and safe—he appealed to Sally. 'Isn't it, Sally,' he said. 'We want Mother, don't we. And we're going to have her, aren't we.'

'Yes—and Father,' said Sally, whose ideas were simple but tenacious.

'Father?' repeated Mrs. Luke, touched. 'Dear child, your poor Jocelyn has no——'

'Mother, you and I must really have a good talk together,' hastily interposed Jocelyn, who saw Sally's mouth opening again. She shouldn't *say* anything; she really shouldn't *say* anything; the less she said the better for everybody. 'You and I. By ourselves. This evening, when Sally——'

'Salvatia, Jocelyn. Please, please.'

'——has gone up to bed.'

'But you know, Jocelyn dear,' said Mrs. Luke, loosening herself from his clasp and withdrawing a little, 'that's just what the dear child can't go up to. Not here. Not in this tiny house. You didn't think, of course, but there isn't an inch of room really—not for three people. So I wanted to tell you—' she began putting his tie straight, her eyes on it, not looking at him —'what I've arranged. You're both going to be taken in next door.'

'Next door, Mother?' said Jocelyn, much surprised, for he couldn't at all recollect the next door people.

'Well, nearly next door,' said Mrs. Luke, diligent over his tie, and excessively annoyed to feel she was turning red. 'At Abergeldie.'

'Abergeldie?' echoed Jocelyn, to whom the name was completely unfamiliar.

'I tell you what we'll do,' said Mrs. Luke, as though she had suddenly had a brilliant idea, on the little maid's appearing in the door bearing a tray that seemed twice as big as she was, and all but dropping it when she caught sight of the young lady on the chair. 'After tea Salvatia shall go and lie down in my bedroom and rest—won't you, Salvatia,—and you and I will have a quiet talk, dear Jocelyn—no, no, Hammond, not there; here, where I've put the table ready—and I'll tell you all about—we want three cups, Hammond, not two—I'll tell you all about——'

But she still couldn't bring herself to mention Mr. Thorpe, and again said Abergeldie.

'Is that lodgings?' asked Jocelyn, who didn't at all like the sound of it.

'Oh, no—it isn't *lodgings*,' said Mrs. Luke brightly, giving his tie a final pat.

§

How was she to tell him about Mr. Thorpe? In what words, once she had got Salvatia upstairs out of the way, could she most quickly create in Jocelyn's mind the image she wished to have there of a good, and honourable, and wealthy man, a man elderly and settled down, who respected and esteemed her, and because he respected and esteemed her wished to make her his wife? A good man, who would be a solid background for them

all. A good man, whose feeling for her—Mrs. Luke was most anxious that Jocelyn shouldn't suppose there was anything warm about Mr. Thorpe—was that of a kind, and much older, brother.

Preoccupied and perturbed, she poured out the tea and drank some herself, and hardly noticed what Sally was doing who, faced for the first time in her life by no table to sit up to and only her lap to put her cup and saucer and spoon and things to eat on, kept on either dropping them or spilling them.

'Well, Mother, you'll just have to be very patient,' said Jocelyn, himself deeply annoyed when Sally's spoon fell off for the third time, and for the third time made a noise on the varnished floor, which only had two rugs on it, and those far apart.

And Mrs. Luke smiled, and said 'Of course,' and hardly noticed, because of her deep preoccupation with Mr. Thorpe.

But when the cup itself slid sideways on the saucer and upset, and Sally's frock was soaked and the cup broken, she was startled into awareness again, and for the moment forgot Mr. Thorpe.

'Oh, *my*!' cried Sally, shaken into speech.

'It really isn't of the slightest consequence, Salvatia,' said Mrs. Luke, who was particularly fond of her tea-cups, of which none had ever yet been broken. 'Pray don't try to pick up anything. Hammond will do so. Jocelyn, ring the bell, will you? But I shouldn't,' she added, for naturally she was vexed at the set being spoilt, and though breeding, she knew, forbids vexation at such *contretemps* being shown, yet it has to get out in some form or other, 'I shouldn't say, "Oh, *my*," when anything unexpected happens.'

'Right O,' murmured Sally, shattered, all Jocelyn's teaching vanishing from her mind.

'Nor,' remarked Mrs. Luke, gently and very clearly, 'should I say, "Right O".'

'I've told her not to a hundred times,' said Jocelyn, wiping Sally's frock with his handkerchief.

'That's right,' murmured Sally, who had now lost her head, and only wanted to admit her evil-doing and be forgiven.

'Nor, dear Salvatia,' said Mrs. Luke, still more gently and clearly, 'should I, I think, say that.'

So then Sally said nothing, for there seemed nothing left to say.

'She'll be perfectly all right ultimately,' said Mrs. Luke, coming down to Jocelyn when presently she had taken her upstairs, and tucked her up on the bed, and told her she was tired and must rest. 'Perfectly.'

Jocelyn was waiting in the sitting-room. He and his mother were now, having got Sally out of the way, going to have their talk.

'You're wonderful, Mother,' he said.

'Darling Jocelyn,' smiled his mother. 'It's that child who is wonderful,' she added. 'Or will be, when she has been properly——' she was going to say scraped, the word gutter coming once more into her mind, but of course she didn't, and substituted something milder. 'When she has been properly trained,' finished Mrs. Luke.

'It sounds like a servant,' said Jocelyn, who was sensitive because of the tin trunk (got rid of in Truro,) and the stiff nightgowns (got rid of in Truro too,) and several other distinct and searing memories.

'Servant? You absurd boy. She's a duchess, who

happens not to have been born right—the most beautiful duchess the world would ever have seen. Now never,' said Mrs. Luke with much seriousness—she felt she must take this situation thoroughly in hand—' never, never let such a word as the one you just used enter your mind in connection with Salvatia again, my dear Jocelyn.'

No, he wouldn't tell his mother about the way Sally had seemed to drift, as if drawn, towards the Cupps, quite obviously wanting to make friends with them, nor about the way she actually had made friends with the spotted mechanic in the Truro garage. And as for Mr. Pinner, for whom he had a curious distaste and of whom the remembrance was definitely grievous to him, Jocelyn wouldn't tell his mother about him either. He would skim over Mr. Pinner. Why intrude him? Why dot the i's of Sally's beginnings? His mother had heard for herself how she spoke, and knew approximately what her father must be like. Let her knowledge remain approximate.

So they went together into the garden—again Mrs. Luke instinctively sought Nature,—Jocelyn determined to keep Mr. Pinner out of his mother's consciousness, and Mrs. Luke determined to get Mr. Thorpe into his.

§

Arm in arm they paced up and down what Mr. Thorpe persisted in calling the drying ground, in spite of Mrs. Luke's steady reference to it as the lawn, and Jocelyn said, ' Her family come from Islington.'

' Suburbans. Like ourselves,' replied his mother, with a really heavenly tact, Jocelyn thought.

But she wasn't thinking of what he was saying and

what she was answering; she was seeking a formula for Mr. Thorpe. And, to gain yet a further moment's grace, —queer how nervous she felt—she stopped a moment in front of the Kerria japonica in the angle of the wall by the kitchen window, and asked him if he didn't think it was doing very well that year.

'Wonderful,' said Jocelyn. 'It's all perfect.'

He sighed with contentment at his mother's progressive and amazing tactfulness. How had she not from the first moment grasped the situation, and needed no explanation at all. Now she was grasping the Pinners, and dismissing them without a single question. 'Suburbans. Like ourselves.' At that moment Jocelyn positively adored his mother.

'Quite perfect,' he said, admiring the Kerria. 'Wherever you are, things grow as they should, and there's peace, and order, and exact *rightness*.'

'Marriage has turned you into a flatterer,' smiled Mrs. Luke, still putting off Mr. Thorpe.

'It has made me realise what a mother I've got,' said Jocelyn, pressing her arm.

'Darling Jocelyn. But surely rather an unusual result?'

'My marriage is unusual.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Luke, bracing herself. 'Yes. I suppose—we had better talk about it.'

'But we *are* talking about it.'

'I mean the future.'

'Well, I've told you my plans.'

'But I haven't told you mine.'

'Yours, Mother?'

He turned his head and looked at her. Surely she was rather red?

'You know, Jocelyn,' she said, in a queer altered voice, 'I was very miserable. Very, very miserable. You mustn't forget that. I really *was*.'

§

How differently Mrs. Luke had meant to introduce Mr. Thorpe; how clearly she recognised that in their present situation he was their only hope, and that he should be explained with the appreciation and praise due to an only hope. And here she was prefacing him by a solemn declaration of her own unhappiness. It wasn't at all the proper beginning. It couldn't but be damaging to Mr. Thorpe. Besides, her pride had always been to appear before Jocelyn in every situation as completely content and calm. Breeding, she had preached to him ever since he was a tot, was invariably calm, and behaved very much like the great description of charity in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. Whatever it felt it didn't show it. But she had had a bad time lately, a bad, bad time, and her nerves had been tried beyond, apparently, their endurance.

'What is it, Mother?' asked Jocelyn, surprised and troubled. Had his mother been speculating, and lost?

She made a great effort to recover her self-control, and tried to smile. 'Really some very good news,' she said, resuming their walk. 'We'll go and sit under the cedar, and I'll——'

'Mother, what is it?' asked Jocelyn again anxiously as she broke off, a cold foreboding creeping round his heart. 'You're not going to—you're not going to fail me now?'

'I'm going to help you more than I've ever done. In fact, if it hadn't been for this—' she was going to say

windfall, but found she couldn't think of Mr. Thorpe as a windfall,—' if it hadn't been for this, I could do very little for Salvatia. She will need——'

Had his mother been speculating, and won ?

But what Salvatia would need Mrs. Luke didn't on that occasion explain, for as on their way to the cedar they passed below the open window of the bedroom Sally had been left in, they heard voices coming from it, and Mrs. Luke, much astonished, stood still.

Almond Tree Cottage was a small low house, and its first floor windows were not very far above the heads of those walking beneath them in the garden. Standing there astonished—for who could Salvatia possibly be talking to ?—Mrs. Luke listened, her surprised eyes on Jocelyn's face. He too listened, but with less surprise, for from past experience he could guess—it was painful to him—what was happening, and he guessed that Sally was reverting to type again, and coalescing with the servant.

At first there was only a murmuring—one voice by itself, then another voice by itself, then two voices together ; and his mother's face was frankly bewildered. But presently Sally's voice emerged, and it rose in a distinct, surprising wail, and they heard it say, or rather cry, ' Oh, Ammond—oh, Ammond——'

Twice. Just like that.

Whereupon Mrs. Luke let go suddenly of Jocelyn's arm, and hurried indoors and upstairs.

§

' Are you unwell, Salvatia ? ' she asked quickly, opening the bedroom door.

On the edge of the bed, her stockinged feet trailing on

the floor, sat Sally, and beside her, also on the edge of the bed, the little maid. Mrs. Luke couldn't believe her eyes. Their arms were round each other. She hadn't realised, somehow, that Hammond had any arms; not the sort that go round other people, not the sort that do anything except carry trays and sweep floors.

It came upon her with an odd shock. If Salvatia were ill, of course Hammond's arms would be in an explainable and excusable position. But Salvatia wasn't ill. Mrs. Luke saw that at once. She wasn't ill, for she was crying; and people who are ill, she had observed, do not as a rule cry.

The little maid jumped up, and stood, very red and scared, with alarmed eyes fixed on her mistress. Sally did just the opposite—she lay down quickly on the bed again, and pulled the counterpane up to her chin and tried to look as if she hadn't stirred from the position the lady had tucked her into when she left her. What she was ashamed of was crying; crying when everybody was so good to her and kind, patting and kissing her and that, even after she had broken the cup. It was terribly ungrateful of her to cry, thought Sally. But she wasn't ashamed of having put her arm round Ammond. Friendly, she was; friendly, and seemed to know a lot for her age, which was six months less than Sally's own. A bit shy she had been and stand-offish at first, but soon got used to Sally, who was feeling ever so lonely and strange, and when Ammond—of all the names for a girl!—came in with hot water for the lady to wash in before the next meal, Sally, taken by her friendly eye, began talking to her, and it was as great a relief as talking to the young fellow in the garage, only with the young fellow she had laughed, and with Ammond, to

her confusion and shame, she did nothing but cry. But then the lady . . . enough to make a cat cry, that lady . . . going to live with them, and never leave them any more . . . keeping on smiling smiles that looked like smiles, and weren't. . . .

'*I* know,' said the little maid, nodding gravely.

Knew a lot, Ammond did, for her age.

§

Sally had been very thankful when that dreadful tea was somehow finished—they had actually tried to make her have more tea, and begin the cup and lap business all over again, but she wasn't to be caught a second time,—she had been very thankful to follow Mrs. Luke upstairs, and let herself be laid out on a bed and told she must rest till supper. Till breakfast next day she would rest if they liked, till kingdom come. She didn't want any supper. There were forks for supper, which were worse than spoons, and perhaps they had that too just sitting round with nothing but their laps. She didn't want anything, not anything in the world, except to be somewhere where the lady wasn't. And the lady had drawn the curtains, and then covered her up with a counterpane, and smoothed back her hair, and told her sleep would refresh her, and bent over her and kissed her, and at last had gone away—and how thankful Sally had been, just to be alone.

Kissed her. In spite of the cup, thought Sally, who lay still as she had been told, and reflected upon all that had been her lot that afternoon. They didn't seem able to stop kissing in that family, thought Sally, in whose own there had been a total absence of what the Pinner circle knew and condemned as pawings about. The

Pinners never pawed, nor did any of their friends. Nice, that was, thought Sally wistfully; knew where you were. Among these here Lukes—so ran her dejected thoughts, with no intention of irreverence but unable, from her habit of language, to run otherwise—one never could tell where one wasn't going to be kissed next. Hands, hair, face—nothing seemed to come amiss to them when they once got going. Kept one on the hop; made one squirmy. And Mr. Luke—*he* was different here. But then he kept on being different. While as for that there lady——

At this point of her meditations Sally had turned her face to the pillow and buried it, and to her surprise she found the pillow was wet, and on looking into this she discovered that it was her own tears making it wet. Then she was ashamed. But being ashamed didn't stop her crying; once she had begun she seemed to get worse every minute. And the little maid, coming in with the hot water, had found her crying quite hard.

§

Mrs. Luke made short work of the little maid. She merely said, in that gentle voice before which all servants went down flat as ninepins, 'Hammond, I am surprised at your disturbing Mrs. Jocelyn's sleep—' and the little maid, very red and with downcast eyes, sidled deprecatingly out of the room.

Then Mrs. Luke took Sally in hand, sitting in her turn on the edge of the bed.

'Salvatia, dear—' she said, laying her hand on the arm outlined beneath the counterpane, and addressing the averted face. 'Salvatia, dear——'

Sally's tears dried up instantly, for she was much too

much afraid to cry, but she buried her face still deeper, and kept her eyes tight shut.

'Don't make confidences to a servant, dear child,' said Mrs. Luke gently. 'Come to Jocelyn, or to me. We're the *natural* ones for you to come to in any of your little troubles. Oh, I know honeymoons are trying for a girl, and often, without knowing why, she wants a good cry. Isn't it so, Salvatia? Then come to me, or to your husband, when you feel like that, but don't say things to Hammond you may afterwards regret. You see, Salvatia dear, you're a lady, aren't you—a grown-up married lady now, and your place is with your husband and me. What, dear child? What did you say?'

Sally, however, hadn't said anything; she had only gulped, trying to choke down her misgivings at this picture of where her place was. With the lady? 'Shouldn't be surprised,' she thought, in great discomfort of mind as she more and more perceived that her marriage was going to include Mrs. Luke, 'if I ain't bitten off more as I can chew——' and immediately was shocked at herself for having thought it. Manners were manners. They had to be inside one, as well as out. No good saying Excuse me, Pardon, and Sorry, if inside you were thinking rude. God saw. God knew. And if you were only polite with your lips, and it wasn't going right through you, you were being, as she remembered from her father's teaching, a whited sepulchre.

And Mrs. Luke, contemplating the *profil perdu* on the pillow, the tip of the little ear, the lovely curve of the flushed cheek, and the tangle of bright hair, bent down and kissed it with a view to comfort and encouragement,

and Sally, trying not to shrink further into the pillow, said to herself, 'At it again.'

'Why did you cry, Salvatia?' asked Mrs. Luke, gently.

'Dunno,' murmured Sally, withdrawing into the furthermost corner of her shell.

'Then, dear, it was simply childish, wasn't it—to cry without a reason, and to cry before a servant too. Things like that lower one's dignity, Salvatia. And you haven't only your own dignity to consider now, but Jocelyn's, your husband's.'

'Oh dear,' sighed Sally to herself, recognising from the tone, through all its gentleness, that she was being given What for—a new kind, and one which it was extremely difficult to follow and understand, however painstakingly she listened. Which parts, for instance, of herself and Mr. Luke were their dignities? 'Good job I ain't a nursin' mother,' she thought, for she knew all about nursing mothers, 'or the lady'd turn my milk sour'—and immediately was much shocked at herself for having thought it. Manners were manners. They had to be inside one, as well as out. 'Never think what you wouldn't say,' had been her father's teaching; and fancy saying what she had just thought!

'*Oh Gawd*,' silently prayed Sally, who had been made to repeat a collect every Sunday to Mr. Pinner, and in whose mind bits had stuck, '*send down the 'Oly Spirit and cleanse the thoughts of my 'eart with 'im forasmuch as without thee I ain't able to. . . .*'

'Perhaps, dear,' said Mrs. Luke, finding it difficult in the face of Sally's silence to go on—not for want of things to say, for there were so many and all so important that she hardly knew where to begin,—'the best thing

you can do is to bathe your eyes in the nice hot water Hammond has put ready, and tidy yourself a little, and then come downstairs. What do you think of that? Isn't it a good idea? It is dull for you up here alone. But bathe your eyes well. We don't want Jocelyn to see we've been crying, do we, dear child——'

And in the act of stooping to give Sally a parting kiss she heard her name being called, loud and cheerily, downstairs in the hall.

She started to her feet.

'Margery! Margery!' called the voice, with the cheerful insistence of one who, being betrothed, has the right to be cheerful and insistent in his fiancée's hall.

Edgar. Come hours before his time.

§

'Oh, hush, *hush*——' besought Mrs. Luke, hurrying down to him.

'Hush, eh?'

'Jocelyn——'

She glanced fearfully along the passage to the back-door.

'He's arrived,' said Mr. Thorpe, not hushing at all. 'Know that. Saw his—well, you can hardly call it a car, can you—his contraption, outside the gate.'

'But I haven't had time yet to tell him——'

'That he's been a fool?' interrupted Mr. Thorpe.

'Come in here,' said Mrs. Luke, taking him by the arm and pressing him into the parlour, the door of which she shut.

'Brought you this,' said Mr. Thorpe, holding up a fish-basket, a big one, in front of her face. 'Salmon. Prime cut. Thought it would be a bit of something

worth eating for your—well, you don't have dinner, do you—meal, then, to-night. Came back early from the City on purpose to get it here soon enough.'

'How kind, how kind,' murmured Mrs. Luke distractedly.

'Plenty of it, too,' said Mr. Thorpe, slapping the basket.

'Too much, too much,' murmured Mrs. Luke, not quite sure whether it were the salmon she was talking about.

'Too much? Not a bit of it,' said Mr. Thorpe. 'I hate skimp.'

And he was going to put down his present on the nearest chair and then, she knew, fold her in one of those strong hugs that scrunched, when she bent forward and hastily took the basket from him. She couldn't, she simply couldn't, on this occasion be folded—not with Jocelyn sitting out there, all unsuspecting, under the cedar.

'Never mind the basket,' said Mr. Thorpe, who felt he had deserved well of Margery in this matter of the fish.

'I must take it to the kitchen at once,' said Mrs. Luke, evading his wide-opened arms, 'or it won't be ready in time for supper.'

'What? No thanks, eh?'

'Yes, yes—afterwards,' said Mrs. Luke, slipping away to the door. 'Jocelyn doesn't know yet. About us, I mean. I haven't had time——'

'Time, eh? Not had time to tell him, you've netted me?'

Mr. Thorpe took out his watch. 'Five minutes,' he said. 'Two would be enough, but I'll give you five.

Trot along now, and come back to me sharp in five minutes. If you don't, I'll fetch you. Trot along.'

Trot along. . . .

Mrs. Luke, shutting him into the parlour, asked herself, as she went down the passage bearing the heavy basket in both her delicate hands, how long it would take after marriage to weed out Mr. Thorpe's language. To be told to trot along, however, was so grotesque—she to trot, she, surely the most dignified of South Winch's ladies!—that it seemed to restore her composure. She would not trot. Nor would she, in the emotional sphere, do anything that corresponded to it. She would neither trot nor hurry; neither physically, nor spiritually. She declined to be bound by five minutes, and a watch in Edgar's hand. Really he must, somehow, come up more to her level, and not be so comfortably certain that she was coming down to his. And what a way to speak of their marriage—that she had netted him!

Frozen, then, once more into calm by Mr. Thorpe's words, she proceeded down the passage with almost more than her usual dignity, and as she passed the kitchen door she held out the fish-basket to the little maid, who came out of the shady corner where the sink was with reluctance, merely saying, 'Boil it.' Then, with her head held high as the heads of those are held who face the inevitable, she went out into the garden, and crossed the grass to where Jocelyn was waiting for her on the seat beneath the cedar.

This took her one minute out of the five. In another four Mr. Thorpe would come out too into the garden, to see why she didn't return. Let him, thought Mrs. Luke, filled with the courage of the cornered. This

thing couldn't be done in five minutes; it couldn't be fired off at Jocelyn's head like a pistol. Foolish Edgar.

§

'Well, Mother?' said Jocelyn, getting up as she approached.

He had been smoking, content to leave whatever it was Sally had been doing in his mother's capable hands, yet wishing to goodness Sally hadn't done it. This trick of wanting to be with servants must revolt his mother. It revolted him; how much more, then, his fastidious mother.

'I can guess what it is, I'm afraid,' he said, as she sat down beside him.

'No,' said Mrs. Luke. 'You haven't any idea.'

'*What* has she been doing, Mother?' he asked, seriously alarmed, and throwing away his cigarette.

'Salvatia? Nothing. Nothing that matters, poor dear child. It's not about her I want to talk. It's about Mr. Thorpe.'

'Mr. Thorpe?'

'Yes. Abergeldie. That's Mr. Thorpe's. That's why you are going there—because it is Mr. Thorpe's.'

'But why should we——?'

'Now Jocelyn,' she interrupted, 'please keep well in mind that Mr. Thorpe is the most absolutely reliable, trustworthy, excellent, devoted man. I can find no flaw in his character. He is generous to a fault—really to a fault. He has a perfect genius for kindness. Indeed, I can't tell you how highly I think of him.'

Jocelyn's heart went cold and heavy with foreboding.

There was a little silence.

'Yes, Mother. And?' he said, after a minute.

'And he is rich. Very.'

'Yes, Mother. And?' said Jocelyn, as she paused.

'When I got your first letter I was, of course, very much upset,' said Mrs. Luke, looking straight in front of her.

'Yes, Mother. And?' said Jocelyn, for she paused again.

'Everything seemed to go to pieces—all I had believed in and hoped for.'

There was a longer pause.

'Yes, Mother. And?' said Jocelyn at last, keeping his voice as level as possible.

'I'm not a religious woman, as you know. I hadn't got God.'

'No, Mother. So?'

'So I—I turned to Mr. Thorpe.'

'Yes, Mother. Quite.'

The bitterness of Jocelyn's soul was complete. A black fog of anger, jealousy, wounded trust, hurt pride and cruellest disappointment engulfed him.

'Why not say at once,' he said, lighting another cigarette with hands he was grimly determined should be perfectly steady, 'that you are going to marry him?'

'If it hadn't been for your marriage it never would have happened,' said Mrs. Luke.

'Quite,' said Jocelyn, very bitter, pitching the newly-lit cigarette away. 'Oh, quite.'

Sally again. Always, at the bottom of everything, Sally.

Then he thought, ashamed, 'My God, I'm a mean cur'—and sat in silence, his head in his hands, not looking up at all, while his mother did her best to make him see Mr. Thorpe as she wanted him to be seen.

In her low voice, the low, educated voice Jocelyn had so much loved, she explained Mr. Thorpe and his advantages, determined that at this important, this vital moment she would not allow herself to be vexed by anything Jocelyn said.

He, however, said nothing. It simply was too awful for speech—his mother, who never during his whole life had shown signs of wanting to marry, going now, now that she was at an age when she might surely, in Jocelyn's twenty-two year old vision, be regarded as immune, to give herself to a complete stranger, and leave him, her son who needed her, God knew, more than ever before, to his fate. That he should hate this Thorpe with a violent hatred seemed natural. Who cared for his damned money? Why should Sally—his mother kept on harping on that—be going to be expensive? As if money, much money, according to what his mother was saying, now that Sally had come on the scene, Sally who was used to being penniless, was indispensable. Masters? What need was there for masters? His mother could teach her. Clothes? Why, whatever she put on seemed to catch beauty from her—he had seen that in the shop in London where he bought the wrap: every blessed thing the women tried on her, however unattractive to begin with, the minute it touched her body became part of beauty. And how revolting, anyhow—marriage. Oh, how he hated the thought of it, how he wanted now beyond anything in the world to be away from its footling worries and complications, away from women altogether, and back at Cambridge, back in a laboratory, absorbed once more in the great tranquil splendours of research!

'He is in the sitting-room,' said Mrs. Luke, when

she had said everything she could think of that she wished Jocelyn to suppose was true.

'Who is?' said Jocelyn.

'Ah, I was afraid you would be angry,' she said, putting her hand on his arm, 'but I hoped that when it was all explained you would understand, and see the great, the immense advantages. Apparently you don't, or——' she sighed—'won't. Then I must be patient till you do, or will. But Mr. Thorpe is waiting.'

'Who cares?' inquired Jocelyn, his head in his hands; and it suddenly struck Mrs. Luke that Mr. Thorpe was waiting very quietly. The five minutes must have been up long ago; she must have been sitting there quite twenty, and yet he hadn't come after her as he had threatened. Knowing him, as she did, for a man absolutely of his word, this struck her as odd.

'Dear Jocelyn,' she said, remembering the fits of dark obstinacy that had at times seized her boy in his childhood, and out of which he had only been got by the utmost patience and gentleness, 'I won't bother you to come in now and see Mr. Thorpe. But as he is going to be your host to-night——'

'He isn't,' said Jocelyn, his head still in his hands, and his eyes still fixed on the grass at his feet.

'But, *dearest* boy——'

'I decline to go near him.'

'But there's *positively* no room here for you both——'

'There's London, and hotels, I suppose?'

'Oh, Jocelyn!'

She looked at him in dismay. He didn't move. She again put her hand on his arm. He took no notice. And aware, from past experiences, that for the next two hours at least he would probably be completely

inaccessible to reason, she got up with a sigh and left him.

Well, she had told him ; she had done what she had to do. She would now go back to Mr. Thorpe.

And she did go back ; and opening the parlour door slowly and gently, for she was absorbed in painful thought, she found Mr. Thorpe sitting on the sofa, busily kissing Sally.

X

§

The following brief dialogue had taken place between him and Sally, before he began to kiss :

'Crikey!' he exclaimed, on her appearing suddenly in the doorway.

'Pardon?' said she, hesitating, and astonished to find a strange old gentleman where she had thought to find the Lukes.

'It's crikey all right,' he said, staring. 'Know who I am?'

'No, sir.'

'Sir, eh?'

He took a step forward and shut the door.

'Father—that's who I am. Yours. Father-in-law. Same thing as father, only better,' said he. 'What does one do to a father, eh? Kisses him. How do, daughter. Kiss me.'

Sally kissed him; or rather, having no reason to doubt that the old gentleman was what he said he was, docilely submitted while he kissed her, regarding his behaviour as merely another example of the inability of all Lukes to keep off pawings; and though she was mildly surprised at the gusto with which this one gave himself up to them, she was pleased to notice his happy face. If only everybody would be happy she wouldn't

mind anything. She hadn't felt that the lady's kisses were expressions of happiness, and Mr. Luke's, when he started, made her think of a funeral that had got the bit between its teeth and couldn't stop running away, more than of anything happy. Father-in-law, on the contrary, seemed as jolly as a sand-boy. And anyhow it was better than having to talk.

This was the way the situation arose in which Mrs. Luke found them.

'Making friends with my new daughter,' said Mr. Thorpe, not without confusion, on perceiving her standing looking on.

'Quite,' said Mrs. Luke, who sometimes talked like Jocelyn.

§

Now to have caught Mr. Thorpe kissing somebody else—she didn't like it when he kissed her, but she discovered she liked it still less when it was somebody else—was painful to Mrs. Luke. Every aspect of it was painful. The very word *caught* was an unpleasant one; and she felt that to be placed in a position in life in which she might be liable to catch would be most disagreeable. What she saw put everything else for the moment out of her head. Edgar must certainly be told that he couldn't behave like this. No marriage could stand it. If a woman couldn't trust her husband not to humiliate her, whom could she trust? And to behave like this to Salvatia, of all people! Salvatia, who was to live with them at Abergeldie during term time, while Jocelyn pursued his career undisturbed at Cambridge—this had been another of Mrs. Luke's swift decisions,—live with them, and be given advantages, and be trained to

become a fit wife for him,—how could any of these plans be realised if Edgar's tendency to kiss, of which Mrs. Luke had only been too well aware, but which she had supposed was concentrated entirely on herself, included also Salvatia ?

And if the situation was disagreeable to Mrs. Luke, it was very nearly as disagreeable to Mr. Thorpe. He didn't like it one little bit. He knew quite well that there had been gusto in his embrace, and that Margery must have seen it. 'Damn these women,' he thought, unfairly.

The only person without disagreeable sensations was Sally, who, unconscious of anything but dutiful behaviour, was standing wiping her face with a big, honest-looking handkerchief, observing while she did so that she wasn't half hot.

'Jocelyn is in the garden, Salvatia,' said Mrs. Luke.

Regarding this as mere news, imparted she knew not to what end, Sally could think of nothing to say back, though it was evident from the lady's eyes that she was expected to make some sort of a reply. She searched, therefore, in her *répertoire*, and after a moment said, 'Fancy that,' and went on wiping her face.

'Won't you go to him ? ' then said Mrs. Luke, speaking very distinctly.

'Right O,' said Sally, hastily then, for the lady's eyebrows had suddenly become rather frightening ; and, stuffing the handkerchief yard by yard into her pocket as she went, she exquisitely slid away.

'I'll be off too,' said Mr. Thorpe briskly, who for the first time didn't feel at home with Margery. 'Back on the tick of ten to fetch 'em both——'

'Oh, but please—wait just one moment,' said Mrs.

Luke, raising her hand as he began to move towards the door.

'Got to have my wigging first, eh?' he said, pausing and squaring his shoulders to meet it.

'What is a wigging, Edgar?' inquired Mrs. Luke gently, opening her clear grey eyes slightly wider.

'Oh Lord, Margery, cut the highbrow cackle,' said Mr. Thorpe. 'Why shouldn't I kiss the girl? She's my daughter-in-law. Or will be soon.'

'Really, Edgar, it would be very strange if you didn't wish to kiss her,' said Mrs. Luke, still with gentleness. 'Anybody would wish to.'

'Well, then,' said Mr. Thorpe sulkily; for not only didn't he see what Margery was driving at, but for the first time he didn't think her particularly good-looking. Moth-eaten, thought Mr. Thorpe, eyeing her. A lady, of course, and all that; but having to sleep later on with a moth-eaten lady wouldn't, it suddenly struck him, be much fun. 'Need a pitch dark night to turn *her* into a handsome woman,' he thought indelicately; but then he was angry, because he had been discovered doing wrong.

'I wanted to tell you,' said Mrs. Luke, ignoring for the moment what she had just witnessed, 'that I have told Jocelyn.'

And Mr. Thorpe was so much relieved to find she wasn't pursuing the kissing business further that he thought, 'Not a bad old girl, Marge—' in his thoughts he called her Marge, though not to her face because she didn't like it— 'not a bad old girl. Better than Annie, anyhow.'

Yes, better than Annie; but less good—ah, how much less good—than young beauty.

'That's all right, then,' he said, cheerful again. 'Nothing like coughing things up.'

No—Edgar was too rough a diamond, Mrs. Luke said to herself, shrinking from this dreadful phrase. She hadn't heard this one before. Was there no end to his dreadful phrases?

'He is much annoyed,' she said, her eyebrows still drawn together with the pain Mr. Thorpe's last sentence had given her.

'Annoyed, eh? Annoyed, is he? I like that,' said Mr. Thorpe vehemently, his cheerfulness vanishing. Annoyed because his mother was making a rattling good match? Annoyed because the richest man for miles round was taking her on for the rest of her life? Of all the insolent puppies . . .

Mr. Thorpe had no words with which to express his opinion of Jocelyn; no words, that is, fit for a drawing-room—he supposed the room he was in would be called a drawing-room, though he was blest if there was a single stick of stuff in it to justify such a name—for, having now seen Sally, his feeling for Jocelyn, which had been one of simple contemptuous indifference, had changed into something much more active. Fancy *him* getting her, he thought—him, with only a beggarly five hundred a year, him, who wouldn't even be able to dress her properly. Why, a young beauty like that ought to be a blaze of diamonds, and never put her feet to the ground except to step out of a Rolls.

'I'm very sorry, Edgar,' said Mrs. Luke, 'but he says he doesn't wish to accept your hospitality.'

'Doesn't wish, eh? Doesn't wish, does he? I like that,' said Mr. Thorpe, more vehemently still.

That his good-natured willingness to help Marge out

of a fix, and his elaborate preparations for the comfort of the first guests he had had for years should be flouted in this way not only angered but hurt him. And what would the servants say? And he had taken such pains to have the bridal suite filled with everything calculated to make the young prig, who thought his sorts of brains were the only ones worth having, see for himself that they weren't. Brains, indeed. What was the good of brains that you couldn't get enough butter out of to butter your bread properly? Dry-bread brains, that's what this precious prig's were. Crust-and-cold-water brains. Brains? Pooh.

This last word Mr. Thorpe said out loud; very loud; and Mrs. Luke shrank again. It strangely afflicted her when he said pooh.

'And I'm afraid,' she went on, her voice extra gentle, for it did seem to her that considering the position she had found him in Edgar was behaving rather high-handedly, 'that if he knew you had kissed his wife, kissed her in the way you did kiss her, he might still less wish to.'

'*Now* we've got it!' burst out Mr. Thorpe, slapping his thigh. '*Now* we're getting down to brass tacks!'

'Brass tacks, Edgar?' said Mrs. Luke, to whom this expression, too, was unfamiliar.

'Spite,' said Mr. Thorpe.

'Spite?' repeated Mrs. Luke, her grey eyes very wide.

'Feminine spite. Don't believe a word about him not wanting to come and stay at my place. You've made it up. Because I kissed the girl.'

And Mr. Thorpe in his anger inquired of Mrs. Luke whether she had ever heard about hell holding no fury

like a woman scorned—for in common with other men who know little poetry he knew that—and he also called her Marge to her face, because he no longer saw any reason why he shouldn't.

'My *dear* Edgar,' was all she could find to say, her shoulders drawn up slightly to her ears as if to ward off these blows of speech, violence never yet having crossed her path.

She didn't get angry herself. She behaved with dignity. She remembered that she was a lady.

She did, however, at last suggest that perhaps it would be better if he went away, for not only was he making more noise than she cared about—really a most noisy man, she thought, gliding to the window and softly shutting it—but it had occurred to her as a possibility that Salvatia, out in the back garden, might be telling Jocelyn that Mr. Thorpe had kissed her, and that on hearing this Jocelyn, who in any case was upset, might be further upset into coming and joining Edgar and herself in the sitting-room.

This, she was sure, would be a pity ; so she suggested to Mr. Thorpe that he should go.

'Oh, I'm *going* all right,' said Mr. Thorpe, who somehow, instead of being the one to be wigged, was the one who was wigging.

'We'll talk it all over quietly to-morrow, dear Edgar,' said Mrs. Luke, attempting to placate.

'Dear Edgar, eh ? ' retorted Mr. Thorpe, not to be shaken by fair words from his conviction that Marge regarded herself as a woman scorned, and therefore that she outrivalled the worst of the ladies of hell. 'Fed-up Edgar's more like it,' he said ; and strode, banging doors, out of the house.

§

Mrs. Luke stood motionless where he had left her. What an unexpected turn things had taken. How very violent Edgar really was; and how rude. A woman scorned? Feminine spite? Such expressions, applied to herself, would be merely ludicrous if they hadn't, coming from Edgar in connection with Salvatia, been so extraordinarily rude.

In connection with Salvatia. She paused on the thought. All this was because of Salvatia. From beginning to end, everything unpleasant and difficult that had happened to her during the last few weeks was because of Salvatia.

But she mustn't be unfair. If Salvatia had been the cause of her engagement to Edgar, she was now being the cause of its breaking off. For surely, surely, breaking off was the only course to take?

'Let me *think*,' said Mrs. Luke, pressing her hand to her forehead, which was burning.

Yes; surely no amount of money could make up for the rest of Edgar? Surely no amount, however great, could make up for the hourly fret and discomfort of having to live with the wrong sort—no, not necessarily the wrong sort, but the entirely different sort, corrected Mrs. Luke, at pains to be just—of mind? Besides, of what use could she be to Jocelyn and Salvatia, married to Edgar, if Jocelyn wouldn't go near him, and Salvatia couldn't because of his amorousness? It would merely make the cleavage between herself and Jocelyn complete at the very moment when he more than ever before in his life needed her. And the grotesqueness of accusing *her*, who had remained so quiet and calm, of being a fury,

the sheer imbecility of imagining *her* actuated by feminine spite! Really, really, said Mrs. Luke to herself, drawing her shoulders up to her ears again at the recollection. And then there was—no, she turned her mind away from those expressions of his; she positively couldn't bear to think of cough it up, bunkum, and pooh.

She went to her little desk and sat down to write a letter to Mr. Thorpe, because in some circumstances letters are so much the best; nor did she want to lose any time, in case it should occur to him too to write a letter, and it seemed to her important that when it comes to shedding anybody one should get there first, and be the shedder rather than the shed; and she had got as far as *Dear Edgar, I feel that I owe it to you*—when Jocelyn appeared in the doorway, with blazing eyes.

§

What had taken place in the garden between Jocelyn and Sally was this:

She had gone out obediently to him, as she had been told. 'Do as you're told,' her father and mother had taught her, 'and not much can go wrong with you.' Innocent Pinners. Inadequate teaching. It was to lead her, before she had done, into many difficulties.

She went, then, as she had been told, over to where she saw Jocelyn, and sat down beside him beneath the cedar.

He didn't move, and didn't look up, and she sat for a long while not daring to speak, because of the expression on his face.

Naturally she thought it was his stomach again, for what else could it be? Last time she had seen him he was smiling as happy as happy, and kissing his mother's

hand. Clear to Sally as daylight was it that he was having another of those attacks to which her father had been such a martyr, and which were familiar to the Pinners under the name of the Dry Heaves. So too had her father sat when they came on, frowning hard at nothing, and looking just like ink. The only difference was that Jocelyn, she supposed because of being a gentleman, held his head in his hands, and her father held the real place the heaves were in. But presently, when the simple remedy he took on these occasions had begun to work, he was better; and it seemed to Sally a great pity that she should be too much afraid of Usband to tell him about it,—a great pity, and wrong as well. Hadn't she promised God in church the day she was married to look after him in sickness and in health? And here he was sick, plain as a pikestaff.

So at last she pulled her courage together, and did tell him.

'Father's stomach,' she began timidly, 'was just like that.'

'What?' said Jocelyn, roused from his black thoughts by this surprising remark, and turning his head and looking at her.

'You got the same stomachs,' said Sally, shrinking under his look but continuing to hold on to her courage, 'you and Father 'as. Like as two peas.'

Jocelyn stared at her. What, in the name of all that was fantastic, had Pinner's stomach to do with him?

'Sit just like that, 'e would, when they come on,' continued Sally, lashing herself forward.

'Do you mind,' requested Jocelyn with icy politeness, 'making yourself clear?'

'Now, Mr. Luke, don't—please don't talk that way,

begged Sally. 'I only want to tell you what Father did when they come on.'

'When what comes on, and where?'

'These 'ere dry 'eaves,' said Sally. 'You'd be better if you'd take what Father did. 'Ad them somethin' awful, 'e did. And you'd be better——'

But her voice faded away. When Jocelyn looked at her like that and said not a word, her voice didn't seem able to go on talking, however hard she tried to make it.

And Jocelyn's thoughts grew if possible blacker. This was to be his life's companion—his *life's*, mind you, he said to himself. Alone and unaided, he was to live out the years with her. A child; and presently not a child. A beauty; and presently not a beauty. But always to the end, now that his mother had deserted him, unadulterated Pinner.

'There's an h in heaves,' he said, glowering at her, his gloom really inspissate. 'I don't know what the beastly things are, but I'm sure they've got an h in them.'

'Sorry,' breathed Sally humbly, casting down her eyes before his look.

Then he became aware of the unusual flush on her face,—one side was quite scarlet.

'Why are you so red?' he asked suddenly.

'Me?' said Sally, starting at the peremptoriness in his tone. 'Oh—*that*.'

She put up her hand and felt her burning cheek. 'Father-in-law,' she said.

'Father *who*?' asked Jocelyn, astonished out of his gloom.

'In-law,' said Sally. ''Im in the 'ouse. The old gentleman,' she explained, as Jocelyn stared in greater and greater astonishment.

Thorpe? The man who was to be his stepfather? But why——?

A flash of something quite, quite horrible darted into his mind. 'But why,' he asked, 'are you so very red? What has that to do—— ?'

He broke off, and caught hold of her wrist.

'Daresay it ain't the gentleman's day for shavin',' suggested Sally.

And on Jocelyn's flinging away her wrist and jumping up, she watched him running indoors with recovered complacency. 'Soon be better now,' she said to herself, pleased; for her father always ran like that too, just when the heaves were going to leave off.

§

And she was right. Next time she saw him, which was at supper, he was quite well. His face had cleared, he could eat his food, and he kissed the top of her head as he passed behind her to his chair.

'Well, *that's* over,' thought Sally, much relieved, though still remaining, through her lowered eyelashes, watchful and cautious. With these Lukes one never knew what was going to happen next; and as she sat doing her anxious best with the forks and other pitfalls of the meal, and the little maid came in and out, free in her movements, independent, able to give notice and go at any moment she chose, Sally couldn't help comparing her lot with her own, and thinking that Ammond was singularly blest. And then she thought what a wicked girl she was to have such thoughts, and bent her head lower over her plate in shame, and Mrs. Luke said gently, 'Sit up, dear child.'

That night a bed was made for Jocelyn on the sitting-

room sofa, Sally slept upstairs in the tiny Spartan room he used to sleep in, and Abergeldie wasn't mentioned. Nor did they have Mr. Thorpe's salmon for supper, because the idea of eating poor Edgar's gift seemed, in the circumstances, cynical to Mrs. Luke ; so Hammond ate it, and never afterwards could be got to touch fish.

Mr. Thorpe had now become poor Edgar to Mrs. Luke. Only a few hours before, he had been thought of as a godsend. Well, he shouldn't have kissed Salvatia. But indeed what a mercy that he had, for it brought clarity into what had been troubled and obscure. Without this action—and it wasn't just kissing, it was enjoyment—Mrs. Luke would, she knew, have gone stumbling on, doing her duty by him, trying to get everybody to like each other and be happy in the way that was so obviously the best for them, the way which would quite certainly have been the best for them if poor Edgar had been as decent as, at his age, it was reasonable to expect. She could, she was sure, have managed Jocelyn, for had she not managed him all his life ? And after marriage she could, she had no doubt, have managed Edgar too ; but what hard work it would have been, what a ceaseless weeding, to take only one aspect of him, of his language !

The enjoyment—it was the only word for it—with which he had kissed Salvatia had spared her all these pains. Certainly it was beneath her dignity, beyond her patience, altogether outside any possible compensation by wealth, to marry and manage a man who enjoyed kissing other women. That she couldn't do. She could do much, but not that. Like the Canon's wife, she would have forgiven everything except enjoyment. And she wrote an urbane letter—why not ?

Surely finality can afford to be urbane ?—after having had a talk with Jocelyn when he arrived with blazing eyes in the sitting-room, a talk which began in violence—his,—and continued in patience—hers,—and ended in peace—theirs ; and by the time they sat down to supper the letter, sealed—it seemed to be the sort of letter one ought to seal—was already lying in the pillar box at the corner of the road, and the last trying weeks were wiped out as though they had never been.

At least, that was Mrs. Luke's firm intention, that they should be wiped out ; and she thought as she gazed at Jocelyn, so content again, eating a supper purged of the least reminder of Mr. Thorpe, that the *status quo ante* was now thoroughly restored. Ah, happy *status quo ante*, thought Mrs. Luke, whose mind was well-furnished with pieces of Latin, happy *status quo ante*, with her boy close knit to her again, more than ever unable to do without her, and she in her turn finding the very breath of her being and reason for her existence in him and all his concerns. Not a cloud was now between them. She had quickly reassured him as to Salvatia's red cheek, —Mr. Thorpe's greeting, she had explained, was purely perfunctory, and witnessed by herself, but the child had such a delicate skin that a touch would mark it.

' You mustn't ever bruise her,' she had said, smiling. ' It would show for weeks.'

' Oh, Mother ! ' Jocelyn had said, smiling too, so happy, he too, to know he had been lifted out of the region of angers, out of the black places where people bruise hearts, not bodies, and in so doing mangle their own.

Yes, she could manage Jocelyn. Tact and patience were all that was needed. Never, never should he know

of Edgar's amorousness, any more than he was ever, ever to know of Edgar's other drawbacks. Let him think of him in the future as the kind, reliable rich man who once had wanted to marry her, but whom she had refused for her boy's sake. She made this sacrifice willingly, happily, for her darling son—so she gave Jocelyn to understand, during the talk they had alone together in the sitting-room.

The truth? No, not altogether the truth, she admitted as she sat eating her supper, her pure, pure supper, with all those horrible gross delicacies, under which she had so long groaned, banished out of sight, her glance resting fondly first on her boy, and then in amazed admiration, renewed with a start each time she looked at her, on the flame of loveliness that was her boy's wife. No; what she had said to Jocelyn in the sitting-room wasn't altogether the truth, she admitted that, but the mutilated form of it called tact. Or, rather, not mutilated, which suggested disfigurement, but pruned. Pruned truth. Truth pruned into acceptability to susceptibility. Was not that tact? Was not that the nearest one dared go in speech with the men one loved? They seemed not able to bear truth whole. Children, they were. And the geniuses—she smiled proudly and fondly at Jocelyn's dark head bent over his plate—were the simplest children of them all.

Yes, she thought, the *status quo ante* was indeed restored, and everything was going to be as it used to be. The only difference was Salvatia.

§

Before a week was over Mrs. Luke left out the word 'only' from this sentence, and was inclined to say—again

with Wordsworth ; curious how that, surely antiquated, poet cropped up—*But oh, the difference*, instead. Salvatia was—well, why had one been given intelligence if not to cope, among other things, with what Salvatia was ?

That first night of reunion with Jocelyn, Mrs. Luke had lain awake nearly all of it, making plans. Very necessary, very urgent it was to get them cut and dried by the morning. The headache she had had earlier in the evening vanished before the imperativeness of thinking and seeing clearly. Many things had to be thought out and decided, some of them sordid, such as the question of living now that there was another mouth to feed, and others difficult, such as the best line to take with South Winch in regard to Mr. Thorpe. She thought and thought, lying on her back, her hands clasped behind her head, staring into the darkness, frowning in her concentration.

Towards morning she saw that the line to take with South Winch about poor Edgar was precisely the line she had taken with Jocelyn : she had given up the hope of marriage, she would say, so as to be able to devote herself exclusively to her boy and his wife.

'See,' she would say, indicating Salvatia, careful at once to draw attention to what anyhow, directly the child began to speak, couldn't remain unnoticed, 'how this untrained, delicious baby needs me. No mother, no education, no idea of what the world demands—could I possibly, thinking only of myself, selfishly leave her without help and guidance ? I do feel the young have a very great claim on us.' And then she would add that as long as she lived she would never forget how well, how splendidly, Mr. Thorpe had behaved.

Pruned truth, again. And truth pruned, she was

afraid, in a way that would cover her with laurels she hadn't deserved. But what was she to do? One needs must find the easiest and best way out of a difficulty,—easiest and best for those one loves.

In order, however, to indicate Salvatia and explain things by means of her, Mrs. Luke would have to produce her, have to show her to South Winch, and in order to do that she would have to give a party. Yes; she would give a party, a tea-party, and invite every one she knew to it—except, of course, Mr. Thorpe.

Mrs. Luke had hitherto been sparing of parties, considering them not only difficult with one servant, and wastefully expensive, but also so very ordinary. Anybody not too positively poor could give tea-parties, and invite a lot of people and let them entertain each other. She chose the better way, which was to have one friend, at most two, at a time, and really talk, really exchange ideas, over a simple but attractive tea. Of course the friends had to have ideas, or one couldn't exchange them. But now she would have a real party, with no ideas and many friends, the sort of party called an At Home, and at it Salvatia should be revealed to South Winch in all her wonder.

The party, however, couldn't be given for at least a week, because of first having to drill Salvatia. A week wasn't much; was, indeed, terribly little; but if the drill were intensive, Mrs. Luke thought she could get the child's behaviour into sufficient shape to go on with by the end of it.

Hidden indoors—and in any case they would both at first hide indoors from a possible encounter with poor Edgar—she would devote the whole of every day to exercising Salvatia in the art of silence. That was all she

needed to be perfect: silence. And how few words were really necessary for a girl with a face like that! No need whatever to exert herself,—her face did everything for her. Yes; no; please; thank you; what couldn't be done with just these, if accompanied by that heavenly smile? Why, if she kept only to these, if she carefully refrained from more, from, especially, the use of any out of her own deplorable stock, it wouldn't even be necessary for Mrs. Luke to say anything about her having had no education; and if she could be trained to add, 'So kind of you,' at the proper moment, and perhaps, 'Yes, we are very happy,' her success would be overwhelming.

But almost immediately on beginning the drill, which she did the next day, Mrs. Luke perceived that this last sentence must be dropped. Poor Salvatia. The poor child was precluded from speaking of happiness, because of its h. Really rather sad, when one came to think of it. She could, relatively easily, be taught to speak of sorrow, of pain, of misfortune, of sickness and of death, but she couldn't be taught, not in a week Mrs. Luke was afraid, to speak of happiness.

Well, Rome wasn't built in a day. 'We must be patient,' she said, smiling at Sally, who seemed to tumble over herself in her haste to smile back.

Almond Tree Cottage was now the scene of tireless activity. The At Home was fixed for the following Thursday week,—eight days ahead; and Mrs. Luke sent Jocelyn off to Cambridge the very morning after he arrived, in order to rearrange matters with his College and look about, as he seemed bent on it, for a suitable little house for them all, though she privately was bent on staying where she was, and keeping Sally with her.

But it did no harm to let him look, and it kept him out of the way for a couple of days, in case Mr. Thorpe should think fit to come round in person, instead of writing. And, having cleared the field, she settled down to devoting herself entirely to Sally.

But Sally, seeing Jocelyn preparing to depart—for some time she couldn't believe her eyes—without going to take her too, was smitten into speech.

'You ain't goin' to leave me 'ere, Mr. Luke?' she asked in tones of horrified incredulity, when at last it began to look exactly as if he were.

'Two days only, darling,' said Jocelyn. 'And you'll be very happy with my mother.'

'But—can't I come with you? I wouldn't be no trouble. I—I'd do anything sooner than—'

She looked over her shoulder; Mrs. Luke, however, was in the kitchen giving her orders for the day.

'—be as 'appy as all that,' she finished, under her breath.

'I shall be much too busy, darling,' said Jocelyn, pleased at the way she was taking their first separation, and not hearing the last words because he was rummaging among coats.

'There's Father,' persisted Sally anxiously. ''*E* could take me in. I wouldn't be no trouble to nobody——'

'Darling, I'm afraid it can't possibly be managed,' said Jocelyn, very thankful to leave her safe with his mother; but she looked so enchanting in her obvious sorrow at being parted from him that he took her in his arms, and kissed her warmly.

'*Kissin's* no good,' said Sally. 'Goin' too's what I'd like.'

'And if I took you too, my beautiful one,' whispered Jocelyn, flaming up at the touch of her, 'I'd do nothing but kiss you instead of doing my business——' which wasn't true, but with Sally in his arms he thought it was; besides, they had been separated for a whole night.

'Turtle doves—oh, *turtle* doves!' exclaimed Mrs. Luke, managing to smile, though she didn't like it, when she came out of the kitchen and found them locked together; for this was happening in what Mr. Thorpe refused to call the hall.

And later on when Jocelyn had gone, she put her arm through Sally's, who was standing at the window staring after him as though it couldn't be true that he had really left her, and drew her away into the little dining-room at the back of the house, because of its greater privacy—she had to consider the possible movements of Mr. Thorpe—and at once began to put the plans she had made in the night into practice, not only taking immense pains with the child's words and pronunciation, but leaving no stone unturned—'As the quaint phrase goes,' she said, smiling at Sally, for why hide her intentions?—in order to win her confidence and love.

Sally was most depressed. She didn't want to love—'Too much of that about as it is,' she thought,—and she hadn't an idea what her confidence was.

The table was arranged with paper and ink, and Mrs. Luke began by kissing her affectionately, and telling her that they were now going to be very busy and happy. 'Like bees,' said Mrs. Luke, looking cheerful and encouraging, but also terrifyingly clever, with her clear grey eyes that seemed to see everything all at once and never were half as much pleased as her mouth was.

'You know how bees store up honey—the bright, golden honey, don't you, dear. Say honey, Salvatia dear. Say it after me——'

Sally was most depressed. Mixed up with her efforts to say honey were puzzled thoughts about her husband's having left her. She understood, from her study of the Bible, that one of the principal jobs of husbands was to cleave to their wives. Till death, the Bible said. Nobody had died. It wasn't cleaving to go away to Cambridge and leave her high and dry with the lady. And though Usband was often very strange, he wasn't anything like as strange as the lady; and though he often frightened her, there were moments when he didn't frighten her at all—when, on the contrary, she seemed able to do pretty much as she liked with him. And she had great hopes that some day she and he would get on quite nicely together, once they had set up housekeeping and he went off first thing after breakfast to his work, and she got everything tidy and ready for him when he came back to his dinner. Yes; she and Usband would settle down nicely then. And later on, when she had a little baby—Sally thought frequently and complacently of the time when she would have a little baby, several little babies—things would be as pleasant as could be. All she wanted, so as to be happy, was no lady, a couple of rooms, Usband to do her duty by, God's Word to study, and every now and then a little baby. It was all she asked. It was her idea of bliss. That, and being let alone.

'Peace an' quiet,' she said to herself, as she sat painfully trying, at Mrs. Luke's request, to discuss with her the habits of bees. She hadn't known they had any habits. She doubted whether she would know a bee if

she saw one. There were no bees in Islington. Wasps, now—she knew a thing or two about wasps. Raw onion was the stuff for when they stung. . . . 'Peace an' quiet,' she said to herself. 'All one asks. This ain't neither.'

In an agony of application Sally perspired through the two days of Jocelyn's absence. Lessons didn't leave off when the paper and ink were cleared away because of the rissoles of lunch and the poached eggs of supper, but went on just as bad while she was eating. 'Salvatia dear, don't 'old your fork like that——' 'Salvatia dear, don't go makin' all that there noise when you drinks——' so did Mrs. Luke's admonishments present themselves to Sally's ill-attuned ear. And after that the lessons were continued in the garden, where she was walked up and down, up and down, till her head, as she said to herself, fair reeled. Never before had Sally been walked up and down the same spot. She used to walk straight sometimes to places, and then come home again and done with it, but never up and down and keeping on turning round. No escape. The lady had her by the arm. Exercise, she called it. And talk! Not only talk herself, but keep on dragging her into it too. Education, the lady called it. Lessons, that's to say. What ones these Lukes were for lessons, thought Sally, remembering her experience at St. Mawes. And there, through the kitchen window every time she passed it, she could see Ammond, washing up as free as air.

The garden was small; the turnings accordingly frequent; and Sally's head, strained by the excessive attention Mrs. Luke insisted on, did indeed reel. Her head . . . How was it, Mrs. Luke was asking herself by the evening of that first day, ostensibly pleasantly chatting, but carefully observing Sally, who, pale and

beautiful, with faint shadows under her eyes, sat looking at her lap so as not to see the lady looking at her,—how was it that so noble a little head, with a brow so happily formed, one would have supposed, for the harbouring of intelligence, should apparently be without any ?

Apparently. Mrs. Luke was careful not to come to any hasty conclusion, but by this time she had been drilling Sally ceaselessly for a whole day, and she had been so clear and patient, and so very, very simple, that she began to think her vocation was probably that of a teacher ; yet no sign of real comprehension had up to then appeared. Goodwill there was ; much goodwill. But no real *grasp*. And, of course, most lamentably little ear. Those h's—it would have been disheartening, if Mrs. Luke hadn't refused to be disheartened, the way Salvatia didn't even seem to know if they were in a word or not. She simply didn't hear them.

'Do you like music, Salvatia ?' said Mrs. Luke, getting up and preparing to test her ear on the clavichord at the other end of the room, an instrument which gave her great pleasure because it wasn't so gross as a piano.

'Yes,' said Sally, who had been strictly drilled that day in naked monosyllables.

'Do you sing, dear child ?'

''Ymns,' said Sally.

'Ah, dear, *dearest* child !' cried Mrs. Luke, drawing her shoulders up to her ears, for after all the pains and labours of the day she was tired, and she couldn't help being, perhaps, a little less patient. 'How do you spell that poor small word ? It is such a tiny, short word, and can't afford to lose any of its letters——'

And in the kitchen, Sally knew, with her hearth swept

and neat, and everything put nicely away for the day, sat Ammond, doing her sewing as free as air.

§

Jocelyn came home on the evening of the third day. He hadn't found a house, and seemed dispirited about that, and looked a great deal at Salvatia, Mrs. Luke thought,—almost as if he had never seen her before; indeed he looked at her so much that he hardly had eyes or attention for anything else.

Mrs. Luke didn't like it.

Certainly the girl was quite extraordinarily beautiful that evening, and seemed even more alight than usual with the strange, surprising flame-effect she somehow made, but one would have supposed that these outwardnesses, once one knew that they were not the symbols of any corresponding inwardnesses, could hardly be sufficient for a man like Jocelyn.

A little pang of something that hurt—it couldn't of course be jealousy, for the very word in such a connection was ludicrous—shot through Mrs. Luke's heart when she more than once caught a look in her boy's eyes as they rested on his wife that she had never seen in any man's eyes when they rested on her herself, but which she nevertheless instantly recognised. The love-look. The look of burning, impatient passion. She had been loved, but never like that, never with that intent adoration.

Sally sat quietly there, neither speaking nor moving, but over her face rippled gladness. Nice, she thought, to get Usband back. It hadn't been half awful without him. Finished now, though; wouldn't happen again. 'Let's forget it,' she said to herself.

And that night, after every one was in bed, Mrs. Luke heard cautious steps creaking up the stairs, and the door of the room Sally slept in across the little landing was softly opened, and some one went in and softly shut it again; and Mrs. Luke didn't like it at all, and ended by crying herself to sleep.

Next day, however, Jocelyn was restored to the self she knew, and was reasonable and detached. They talked over the house in Cambridge question, and he quite agreed with his mother that when he went up, which he was due to do in nine days time, while he continued in his spare moments there to search for one she would keep Sally with her at Almond Tree Cottage.

'And even if you find one, dearest,' said Mrs. Luke, 'remember we can't afford to take it till I have got rid of this one.'

'Quite, Mother,' said Jocelyn—so reasonable, so completely detached.

'And meanwhile, the best thing will be for Salvatia to stay quietly here with me.'

'Far and away the best, Mother,' said Jocelyn, whose thoughts had gone off with renewed eagerness to his work, to the two spacious months of undisturbed labour ahead of him in those quiet rooms of his in Austen's Court.

What was Sally's surprise to find that Jocelyn's return made no difference to the lessons. They went on just the same; indeed, they seemed every day to get worse, and he, except at meals and when he crept into her room at night, stayed at the top of the house shut up by himself, or went out for his daily walk after lunch and didn't take her with him.

At night she tried to ask him about these things,

because this was the time he was most likely to answer, but he only whispered, ' Hush—Mother will hear.'

' Not if you whispers,' whispered Sally.

' She'd hear the whispers,' whispered Jocelyn.

Why Mother shouldn't hear whispers Sally was unable to make out.

And there at night was Usband, all for being friendly and loving, and in the day didn't seem to know she was alive. Warmed up a bit, he did, towards evening, but else sat hardly opening his mouth, his eyes looking at something that wasn't there. Was this, Sally might well in her turn have asked if she had been able to formulate such a question, companionship ? But even if she had formulated it she wouldn't have asked it, because she was so meek.

Strange, however, how the meek go on being meek till the very moment when they do something from which bold persons would shrink. This is what Sally did, after having progressed that week steadily towards despair.

Gradually but steadily, by piecing together bit by bit the things Mrs. Luke and Jocelyn said to each other at meals and in the evening, she became aware of what was in store for her. First, a party ; an enormous party, at which everybody who wasn't a gentleman was going to be a lady ; and she was to be at it too, and it was for this that her mind and manners were being fattened up so ceaselessly by Mrs. Luke. Then, two days after the party, Jocelyn, her husband who had promised in church to cherish her, was going away to Cambridge, and going to stay there by himself till the summer, just as if he weren't married. How could he cherish her from Cambridge ? It was evident even to Sally that it couldn't be done. Finally, she was to be left at Almond Tree

Cottage alone with Mrs. Luke, being educated, being made fit, being fattened inside just as you fatten animals outside. What for? She hadn't married Mrs. Luke. Wasn't she able, just as she was, to be a good wife to Usband, and a good mother later on to the little babies? What more could a girl do than be ready to work her fingers to the bone for him? And she could cook so nicely, give her a chance; and she could mend as well as any one; and as for keeping the house clean, hadn't her mother taught her never to dream of sitting down and taking up her sewing while there was so much as a single speck of dirt about?

With growing horror, and steadily increasing despair, Sally listened to the talk at meals. She had learned to say nothing now but yes, no, thank you, and please, and either kept her eyes on her plate or, through her eyelashes, watched with pangs of envy the happy Hammond's free entrances and departures. She herself never moved without Mrs. Luke's arm through hers or round her shoulders,—'We are quite inseparable,' Mrs. Luke would say, smiling at Jocelyn, when the meals were over and the time had arrived for going somewhere else, as she either encircled Sally's shrinking shoulder or put her hand through her limp arm. 'Aren't we, Salvatia?'

And Sally, starting—she had got into a curious habit, which Mrs. Luke much deplored, of starting when she was spoken to, however gently—hurriedly said, 'Yes.'

Queer, thought Mrs. Luke, who noticed everything but was without the power of correct deduction, seeing that the child so obviously was anxious to please and she herself so certainly was anxious to help her, queer how difficult it was to do anything with her in the way of

confidence and love. And to Jocelyn in the evenings, after Sally had been told she was tired and must wish to go to bed, which she quickly learnt meant that she was to get up at once and say goodnight and go to it, Mrs. Luke would talk about her lovingly and humorously, and laughingly describe what she called the intensive methods of cultivation she was applying to the marvellous child.

'You'll see how beautifully she'll behave at our little party,' she said. 'And as for what she'll be like after a few months—well, dearest, all I can say is that I promise to hand her over to you fit to be your real companion, and not only—' Mrs. Luke shivered slightly at the thought of the creaking stairs—'just a wife.'

Two evenings before the day of the party, Mrs. Luke, who had made, she knew, no headway at all in spite of the most untiring efforts in winning the confidence and love she expected, remarked hesitatingly, when she and Jocelyn were alone together after Sally's departure for bed, that the child appeared to have rather curious and disconcerting resistances.

'Do you mean she doesn't obey you?' asked Jocelyn, much surprised.

'Oh, with almost too much eagerness. No. I mean something mental. Or rather,' amended Mrs. Luke, who by this time was definitely disappointed in Sally's mind but was still prepared to concede her a soul, 'spiritual. Spiritual resistances. Disconcerting *spiritual* resistances. She seems to shut herself up. And I ask myself, what in? A child like that, with a—well, really rather blank mind at present. What is she withdrawing into? Where does she *go*, Jocelyn?'

And that night when, having given his mother time to go to sleep and the house was quiet, Jocelyn stole upstairs

to Sally, full of nothing but love for her, she made a scene. He called it a scene ; she called it mentioning. She had screwed herself up to mentioning to him that it was wrong to leave her, as she now beyond any possibility of doubt knew that he was going to leave her, and go away by himself to Cambridge.

A scene with Sally. Jocelyn was as much amazed, and correspondingly outraged, as if his fountain-pen had turned on him and declared that what he was making it write was all wrong. For Sally took her stand on the New Testament, on the Gospel of St. Mark, Chapter X, Verses 7 and 8, and not only declared there was no mistaking the words, and that it wasn't his wife a man had to leave but his father and mother, and that he had to leave them so as to cleave to his wife, and that they two were to be one flesh, but asked him how he could either cleave or be one flesh if he were in Cambridge and she in South Winch ?

It was past midnight and pitch dark, so he couldn't see her face, and accordingly wasn't bewitched. Also, he had found her waiting up for him, not gone to bed at all, but dressed and sitting in a chair, so that, again, he wasn't bewitched. When one neither saw nor touched Sally it was quite easy not to be bewitched.

' For heaven's sake don't *talk*,' he said in a low voice, when he had got over his first astonishment. ' Don't you know Mother will hear ? '

Sally couldn't help that. She had got to say it. God was on her side. His laws were going to be broken, and nothing made Sally so brave as having to take up the cudgels in defence of God's laws. Besides, if the dark prevented Jocelyn from seeing her beauty it saved her from seeing the icy displeased look on his face that made

her falter off into silence. And she was in despair. Apart from the right or the wrong of it, she felt she couldn't possibly be left alone with Mrs. Luke. Therefore, having mentioned God's laws to him, she proceeded to entreat him to take her with him, it didn't matter into what hole, or let her go to her father's, and he come and see her whenever he had time.

'I told you—I told you the other day,' said Sally, trying to subdue her voice to a whisper, but it kept on breaking through, 'when you was only goin' to be away for two days that I didn't 'alf like it. 'Ow do you suppose I'm goin' to like weeks and weeks? And it ain't *right*, Mr. Luke—it ain't *right*. You only got to read St. Mark——'

Jocelyn was amazed. Sally talking like this? Sally suddenly making difficulties, and having an opinion, and judging? Dragging in the Bible, too, just like somebody's cook.

'You don't understand,' he said in a low voice because of his mother, but a voice quite as full of anger as if he had been shouting. 'How can you? What do you know about anything?'

'I know what ain't bein' one flesh,' persisted Sally, greatly helped in the matter of courage by the dark.

He gathered his dressing-gown round him; it sounded exactly as if a servant were daring to talk familiarly to him.

'This isn't the time,' he whispered, infinitely disgusted, 'to argue.'

'P'raps you'll tell me when the time is, then,' said Sally, who knew she could never be alone with him in the day because of Mrs. Luke; and really in the dark, unable to see her, Jocelyn had the impression of some

woman of the lower classes confronting him with arms akimbo.

'Certainly not at one in the morning,' he said freezingly. 'I shall go downstairs again. I didn't come up here to listen to outrageous rot.'

'Mr. *Luke*! Rot? When it's God's Word I'm talkin' about? Ain't you my 'usband? Didn't you vow——'

There was a tap at the door.

'You see?' said Jocelyn, starting and extraordinarily put out that Mrs. Luke should know he was in there. 'You *have* disturbed my mother.'

'What is it, Jocelyn?' his mother's voice asked anxiously from outside.

He opened the door. She too was in a dressing-gown, and her long hair hung down in thick plaits.

'What is it, Jocelyn?' she asked again.

'Only that Sally has gone out of her senses,' he said shortly; and he stalked away downstairs, ashamed to have been caught by his mother upstairs, angry with himself for being ashamed, and seriously enraged with Sally.

'Salvatia, Jocelyn dearest—*do* remember,' called Mrs. Luke plaintively after him.

'Oh, Christ!' muttered Jocelyn, banging the sitting-room door behind him and throwing himself on the hard narrow sofa from which, only a quarter of an hour before, he had got up, all warm with love, to go to his wife.

And in the room overhead Mrs. Luke put her arms round Sally, and did her best, while tactfully asking no questions, to soothe and calm the child. But how can one soothe and calm anything that behaves exactly as if it were a very rigid, unresponsive, and entirely dumb stone?

§

There were explanations next day. Mrs. Luke put the whole situation patiently and clearly before Sally. It wasn't fair, she said to Jocelyn, after a private talk with him during which he had told her the sorts of things Sally had said in the night, it wasn't fair to keep the child quite in the dark as to their arrangements. Even if she weren't altogether able to understand, she should, Mrs. Luke said, be given the opportunity of doing so.

So when breakfast was cleared away, and Jocelyn had withdrawn to his attic, Mrs. Luke shut herself up as usual with Sally in the dining-room, and spent the morning patiently explaining.

Sally said nothing. This made it difficult for Mrs. Luke to know whether she had understood. And yet how simple it was. Jocelyn's work, the paramount importance of his work, on which both his and Salvatia's future and perhaps—who knew?—the world's, depended; their present, but no doubt temporary, poverty, which made it out of the question for them to follow him to Cambridge till Almond Tree Cottage had been let; the necessity of teaching Salvatia, during long, quiet, uninterrupted days, all the little odds and ends, so small and yet so indispensable, that go to make up the wife of a gentleman; and the impossibility of asking Jocelyn to leave his rooms in College and live in anything as uncomfortable and makeshift as the sorts of lodgings within their means were bound to be. Of course had Salvatia been alone in the world, and with nowhere at all to go to, some such arrangement would have had to be made. But she wasn't alone. She had her husband's mother, and her husband's mother's

home, and affection, and sympathy, and the warmest welcome.

'Just a little patience, Salvatia dear,' said Mrs. Luke, 'and our little problems will all quite naturally solve themselves. We shall have got a tenant for this house, Jocelyn will have found a nice home for us in Cambridge, you will meanwhile have learnt everything necessary to make you able to be its perfect little mistress, and we'll all live happily ever after.'

Now wasn't this kind? Surely it was very kind, thought Mrs. Luke. And wasn't it loving? Surely it was altogether loving. Yet Salvatia said never a word.

Indeed, Sally was necessarily dumb. She had too few words to enter into controversy with Mrs. Luke, and knew that if she tried to she would only collapse into tears. But after lunch, through which she sat saying nothing, when Mrs. Luke sent her out into the garden alone because she herself had to go down that afternoon to the shops to see about the cakes for her party next day, Sally went to the one corner which wasn't overlooked by the windows of the house, owing to an intervening tool-shed, and, leaning against the iron rails that separated Mrs. Luke's property from Mr. Thorpe's, wept bitterly.

She clutched the top rail with both hands, and laying her head on them wept most bitterly; for it was plain now to her that her dream of two rooms and no lady was never to come true, and that meanwhile—what was the good of blinking facts?—her husband had deserted her. And she had no money; only five shillings her father had given her as a wedding present,—that was all. Handsome as a present, but not enough, she was sure, to get her home to him. If only she could go home to

him, and escape any more of Mrs. Luke, and escape the terrible, the make-you-come-over-all-cold-to-think-of party! Then, when Usband arrived at his college, she could turn up there and give him a surprise, and find a room for herself somewhere close, and live in it as quiet as a mouse, not bothering him at all or interrupting, but near enough to feel still married.

Sally's body was shaken by sobs; even the rail on which she leant her head, her head with its bright, tumbled hair, whose ends, getting into her eyes, were wet and darkened by her grief, was shaken. She could bear no more. She couldn't bear any more of anything in the house behind the tool-shed. Yet what was she to do? Five shillings would get her nowhere——

'Crying, eh?' said a voice on the other side of the fence.

And looking up with a great start, Sally beheld Father-in-law.

XI

§

Mr. Thorpe, being a man accustomed all his life to success in everything he undertook—except in the case of Annie, but even she had been a success at first—had spent a week of bitterness.

He was aggrieved, deeply aggrieved; and he hated the hole and corner way Mrs. Luke had hidden from him, refusing to see him, refusing any sort of explanation, turning him down with a single letter, and not answering when he wrote back.

He, who was very well aware that he was conferring everything, that he was giving her a chance in a million, when he called was shown the door; and all he had done for her, the affection he had bestowed, the gifts he had lavished, were as though they had not been. In the sight of South Winch and of his own household he was humiliated. But it went deeper than that: he knew himself for kind, and no one wanted his kindness; he knew himself for generous, and no one wanted his generosity either. Naturally he was full of resentment; so full, that he hadn't even gone to his office regularly that week, but had hung about his house and grounds instead, fault-finding.

Where he hung about most was that part of his plantations which abutted on the meadow dividing Abergeldie

from Mrs. Luke; and wandering among his conifers he could see, without himself being seen, anything that went on in her miserable plot of ground. If he had been told that such behaviour was undignified he would have replied that dignity be damned; for not only was he smarting under Mrs. Luke's ingratitude, not only was he annoyed beyond measure at not going to get the wife he no longer really wanted—who would wish to be tied up to a jealous, middle-aged woman, when there were so many pretty, cheerful girls about?—but he longed, with a simple longing he hadn't felt since he first went sweethearting as a boy, to see Sally again.

He did see her; always, however, arm in arm with Hell's Fury, as he now called her who had so recently been his Marge. Then, on this Wednesday afternoon, more than a week after Mrs. Luke had shown herself in her true colours—a jolly good thing he had found her out before and not after marriage, thought Mr. Thorpe, who yet was enraged that he had,—as he wandered among his conifers after luncheon, nursing his grievances and glancing every now and then at the little house across the meadow, so insignificant and cheap and nevertheless able to play such a part in his life, he saw young beauty at last come out alone, and go round to the back of the tool-shed, and behave as has been indicated.

For a few minutes Mr. Thorpe stayed where he was, in case the H.F.—so, for convenience sake, did he abbreviate the rude nickname he had given Mrs. Luke—should come out too; but when some time had passed and nobody appeared, he concluded that the two high-brows had gone for a walk, and Beauty for once was alone. Crying, too. What had they been doing to

the girl, that precious pair of hoity toity treat-you-as-dirters, Mr. Thorpe asked himself. Then, climbing cautiously over the fence, and crossing the field close to the belt of firs, he arrived unseen and unheard to where Sally, her head bowed over her hands, was standing crying.

How kind he was. What a comfort he was. And how clear in his instructions as to what she was to do. It was quite easy to say things to Father-in-law; he seemed to understand at once.

Nobody had told Sally he wasn't her father-in-law. The Lukes' habit of silence towards her about their affairs had left her supposing he was what he said he was, and she herself had heard him not being contradicted by Mrs. Luke when she came into the drawing-room that day and he told her he was making friends with his new daughter.

Sally was aware that Jocelyn's own father was dead, and she had at first supposed Mr. Thorpe was Mrs. Luke's second husband. In the confusion of mind in which she had been since arriving at Almond Tree Cottage, she had had no thoughts left over for wondering why, if he were, he lived somewhere else. Dimly the last few days, not having seen him again, she had begun to think, though with no real interest, that perhaps Mrs. Luke hadn't quite married him yet, but only very nearly. Anyhow it didn't matter. He said he was her father-in-law, and that was good enough for her. Such a kind old gentleman. Much older than her own father. Might easily have been her grandfather, with all that bald head and grey moustache.

And Mr. Thorpe's pleasure, nay, delight, at being able to help Beauty and at the same time give those two

high-brows something to talk about, was very great. This was indeed killing two birds with one stone—and what birds! He listened attentively to all she brokenly and imperfectly said; he entirely applauded her idea of going back to her father for a bit, and assured her there was no place like home; he told her he would send her there in one of his cars, quite safe from door to door; he advised her to stay with her father till her husband did his duty, which was to make a home for her and live with her in it; he asked why she should allow herself to be deserted, to be left alone with Mrs. Luke, who would do nothing but try and cram her head with rubbish——

'Don't you like 'er?' asked Sally, surprised.

'No,' said Mr. Thorpe stoutly.

'But you're goin' to marry 'er,' said Sally, more surprised.

'Catch *me*,' said Mr. Thorpe.

'But then you ain't my father-in-law,' said Sally, more surprised than ever.

'Yes I am,' said Mr. Thorpe hastily. 'Once a father-in-law always a father-in-law,' he assured her,—and hurried her off this subject by asking her why she should be treated by her husband as if she weren't married at all, and by what right young Luke thought he could behave differently from any husband any one had ever heard of. Scandalous, said Mr. Thorpe, to leave her. Shocking. Incomprehensible. And that so-called husband of hers with his marriage vows not yet had time to go cold on his lips!

In fact, Mr. Thorpe said out loud and beautifully everything Sally had thought and not been able to get into words.

The result was that, encouraged and supported, indeed urged and driven, she took one of those desperate steps characteristic of the very meek, and, acting according to Mr. Thorpe's clear and precise instructions, stole out of the house at five next morning—the very day of the party, from which he, who knew all about it from his housekeeper, and had tried to console himself by thinking of the piles of strawberries and peaches and quarts of cream he wasn't going to send to it, insisted that she should at all costs escape—carrying only a little bag, with her five shillings in it and her comb and tooth-brush ; and, creeping down the stairs holding her breath, got out without a sound through the kitchen window, anxiously listening for a moment as she passed the shut sitting-room door on the other side of which Jocelyn lay asleep,—Jocelyn, who that night, being still much annoyed with her, had very fortunately not been upstairs.

At the corner of the road was Mr. Thorpe's car. He himself remained discreetly in bed. No use overdoing things. Besides, he could wait. He knew where to find Beauty when the time came, which was more than those damned Lukes did ; and he had given his chauffeur the necessary orders the night before, and could rely on their being carried out to the letter ; so that Sally found, when she got into the car, which was more splendid outside and more soft inside than she could have believed possible, not only a lovely rug of the silkiest fur, which the chauffeur, a most attentive young gentleman, wrapped round her legs as carefully as if they were the Queen's, but a basket full of everything for breakfast, even hot coffee, and an enormous box of chocolates which were for her to keep, the chauffeur said, with Mr. Thorpe's compliments. And such was the effect on her

of all this moral and physical support that she no longer, as she was smoothly and deliciously borne along through sleeping South Winch, across awakening London, past sunshiny fields and woods just flushing green, on and on, into Essex, into Cambridgeshire, smooth and swift, with a motion utterly different from the one Jocelyn's car made and completely confidence-inspiring, she no longer felt as if she were doing anything that was frightening, and also, perhaps, wrong. Could anybody be doing anything very wrong who had such a splendid car to sit in, and such a respectful and attentive young gentleman driving it?

§

Mr. Pinner disillusioned her.

For many years he hadn't tasted such quiet happiness, such contentment and well-being, as during the four weeks he had been without Sally. Her marriage to a gentleman, to one of the scholars from Cambridge, was known to every one in the village, and he was proud of it, very proud. Sally, besides having been handed over safe and sound to some one else's care, had risen in life and was now a lady. He had every reason to be proud of her, and no further bother. Now for the first time he could live, after forty years of the other thing, free from females. Was it sinful, he asked himself occasionally, and at variance with God's Word, to be so very happy all alone? He didn't think it could be. He had served his time. Forty years in the wilderness he had had—just like the Israelites, who had come out of it too, just as he had, and enjoyed themselves too at last, as he was enjoying himself, quietly and nicely. No husband or father could have been fonder of his wife and daughter

than he had been of his, or done his duty by them more steadily. Surely now, both of them being safely settled, it couldn't be wrong to like having a rest? He loved Sally, but she had been a back-breaking responsibility. For four weeks now he had enjoyed himself, and with such relish that when he got up in the morning and thought of the quiet, free hours ahead of him, he had often quavered into song. Then came the day when, peacefully dusting the toffee in his window, and thinking how prettily the birds were singing that fine spring morning, and of the little bit of mutton he was going to do in capers for his dinner, he saw an enormous closed car coming down the village street, and with astonishment beheld it stop in front of his shop, and Sally get out.

Mr. Pinner knew enough of what cars cost to be sure this one wasn't anyhow Mr. Luke's. Things like that cost as much as two of Mr. Luke's five hundreds a year; so that the car, of which Sally had been so proud, far from impressing him only frightened him. And when, after the chauffeur had handed her a bag, he saw him turn the car round and disappear, going away again without her while she came running up the steps, he was more frightened than ever.

What had happened? Not a month married, and back again by herself with a bag.

'I come 'ome,' said Sally in the doorway, still bright with the sheer enjoyment of the ride, yet, faced by her father's amazement, conscious of a slight lowering of her temperature. 'My! You ain't 'alf small, Father,' she added, surprised, after looking at the tall Jocelyn and the broad Mr. Thorpe, by how little there was of Mr. Pinner. 'Almost count you on the fingers of one 'and,' she said.

'Want more fingers than I got to count *you*,' retorted Mr. Pinner, retreating behind the counter and feeling that these words somehow constituted a smart preliminary snub.

He didn't offer to kiss her. He stood entrenched behind his counter and stared up at her, struck, after having got out of the habit of her beauty, into a new astonishment at it. But it gave him no pleasure. It merely frightened him. For it blew up peace.

'Where's your 'usband?' he inquired, afraid and stern.

'Oh—*'im*,' said Sally, trying to look unconcerned, but flushing. 'E's with 'is mother, 'e is. Ain't you pleased to see me, Father?' she asked, in an attempt to lead the conversation off husbands at least for a bit; and tighter to her side she hugged the box of chocolates, because the feel of it helped her to remember Father-in-law's approval and encouragement. And he was a gentleman, wasn't he? And a lot older even than Father, so must know what was what.

'Oh, indeed. With 'is mother, is 'e,' said Mr. Pinner, ignoring her question. ''Oos car was that?' he asked.

'Father-in-law's,' said Sally, hugging her chocolates.

'Oh, indeed. And 'oo may father-in-law be?'

'The gentleman as is—as was goin' to marry Mr. Luke's mother.'

'Oh, indeed. And you ride about in 'is car meanwhile. *I* see.'

'Lent it to me so I can come 'ome.'

'What do 'e want to send you 'ere for, then?' asked Mr. Pinner, leaning on his knuckles, his blue eyes very bright. 'Ain't your 'ome where your 'usband's is? Ain't that a married woman's 'ome?'

'I only come on a visit,' faltered Sally, whose spirits were by now in her shoes. Her father had often scolded her, but she had never been afraid of him. Now there was something in his eye that made her feel less sure that she had taken, as Mr. Thorpe had told her, the one possible and completely natural step. 'I only come for a few days, while Mr. Luke——'

'Mr. Luke know you're 'ere ?' interrupted her father.

''E don't know yet,' said Sally. 'But I——'

'That's enough,' said Mr. Pinner, holding up a hand. 'That's quite enough. No need for no more words. You go back right away to your 'usband, my girl. Come to the wrong box, you 'ave, for 'arbourin' runaway wives.'

'But, Father—' she stammered, not yet quite able to believe that in coming back to him she had only got out of the frying pan into the fire, 'you got to listen to *why* I come——'

He held up his hand again, stopping her. He had no need to listen. He could see for himself that she was a runaway wife, which was against both man's and God's laws.

Sally, however, persisted. She put her bag down on the counter, behind which he firmly remained, and facing him across it tried to give him an idea of what had been happening to her, and what had been going to happen to her much worse if she had stayed.

He refused to be given an idea of it. He turned a deaf ear to all explanations. And he was merely scandalised when she said, crying by this time, that she couldn't, couldn't be left alone with Mr. Luke's mother, for where a husband thinks fit to leave his wife, said Mr. Pinner, always supposing it is respectable, there that

wife must remain till he fetches her. This he laid down to Sally as a law from which a married woman departs at her peril, and he laid it down with all the more emphasis, perhaps, because of knowing how unlikely it was that he himself would ever have had the courage to enforce it in the case of Mrs. Pinner, and that, if he had, how certain it was she wouldn't have stayed five minutes in any place he tried to leave her in.

Sally was in despair. What was she to do? The little shop looked like paradise to her, a haven of peaceful bliss after the life she had led since last she saw it. She cried and cried. She couldn't believe that her father, who had always been so kind really, wouldn't let her stay with him for the two days till Jocelyn got back to Cambridge.

But not even for one night would Mr. Pinner, who was secretly terrified of Jocelyn, and sure he would be hot on his wife's tracks and make a scene and blame him if he gave her so much as an inch of encouragement, harbour her. Back she should go by the very next train to her husband and her duty; and the breaking of marriage vows, and the disregard of the injunctions in the New Testament which had so much shocked her in Jocelyn, were now thrown at her by Mr. Pinner, who accused her of precisely these. Useless for Sally, clinging to the hope of somehow being able to justify herself and be allowed to stay, to say through her tears that the Gospel didn't mention what a woman had to do but only what a man had to, because to that Mr. Pinner replied that no Gospel could be expected to mention everything, and that in any case, when it came to sinning, the sexes couldn't be kept apart.

§

He walked her off to the little station three miles away. The bag the respectful chauffeur had wanted to carry for her up those few steps she now carried three miles herself.

'Pity you was in such a 'urry to let that there car go,' Mr. Pinner remarked sarcastically, as they trudged almost in silence along the lanes.

Sally gulped; delicately, because even her gulps were little gulps,—gentle, delicate little things. She didn't know what was to become of her, she really didn't. Go back to that dreadful house, and arrive in the middle of the party? Face real wrath, real deserved wrath, from those who even when they were being kind had terrified her? So thoroughly had Mr. Pinner's horror at what she had done cleared her mind of Mr. Thorpe's points of view that she felt she hadn't a leg to stand on, and would do anything, almost, sooner than, covered with shame, go back to the anger of the Lukes. But what? What could she do except go back? Yet if she had been miserable there while she was still good, how was she going to bear it now that she had become wicked? She shuddered to think of what Mrs. Luke would be like really angry—and Mr. Luke, who had the right not to leave her alone even at night . . .

Sadly did Sally gulp from time to time, and every now and then emit a faint sob, as she walked in silence that morning beside the adamant Mr. Pinner to the branch-line station. She hadn't been in the Woodles district very long, but it seemed to her as she passed along its quiet lanes that she loved every stick and stone of it. It was what she understood. It was peace. It was

home. Her father went with her as far as Cambridge, so as to put her safely into the express to Liverpool Street, and his instructions were, after buying her a first class ticket—he felt that Mr. Luke would wish her to travel first class, and it gave him a gloomy pride to buy it—that she was to take a taxi from Liverpool Street, and go in it all the way to South Winch.

He then, with the ticket, gave her a pound note.

'It can't be more than ten miles out,' said Mr. Pinner, who had never in his life before squandered money, let alone a pound, on a taxi, but who tried to console himself with the thought that it would have been well spent if only it got Sally safe back to where she belonged; and though he was depressed he was also proud, for it, too, gave him a kind of sombre satisfaction.

'Been an expensive day for me, this,' he said, gloomy, but proud.

Sally gulped.

He kept her in the waiting-room at the station till the last moment, for she was attracting the usual too well-remembered attention, and beauty in tears was even more conspicuous than beauty placid, and then he hurried her along to the front of the train, and put her in a carriage in which there was only one lady—a real lady, of course, thought Mr. Pinner, anxiously taking stock of her, or she wouldn't be travelling first class.

'Beg pardon, Madam,' he said in his best behind-the-counter manner, taking his hat off. 'You goin' to London by any chance?'

Seeing that the train didn't stop till it got there, the lady couldn't say anything but yes; and then Mr. Pinner asked her if she would mind keeping an eye on his daughter, who, though a married lady too—the lady

made a little bow of acknowledgement of this tribute to her evidently settled-down appearance, though she was, in fact, a spinster—yet didn't know her way about very well.

Then when the train began to move, and Sally's face, as she leant out of the window to say goodbye, was a study in despair, Mr. Pinner relented enough to pat her tear-stained cheek, and running a few steps beside the carriage bade her not take on any more.

'What's done's done,' he called out after the train, by way of cheering her.

And Sally, dropping back into her corner, pulled out her handkerchief and wept.

§

Yes. What was done was done true enough, she thought, mopping the tears as they rolled down her face, including her having married Mr. Luke and his mother; for she now regarded him and his mother as all of a piece.

The lady at the other end of the carriage, who, however hard she tried, couldn't take her eyes off her—and she did try very hard, for she hated staring at grief—ventured after a while to repeat Mr. Pinner's advice, and suggested, though in more Luke-like language, that Sally shouldn't take on. Whereupon Sally, the voice being sympathetic and the face kind, took on more than ever.

'Oh, *please* don't,' said the lady, much concerned, moving up to the seat opposite her. Such liquefaction she had never seen, nor such loveliness in spite of it. When she herself cried, which was very rarely—what was the good?—she became a swollen thing of lumps.

'You mustn't, really,' she begged. 'Your eyes—you simply *mustn't* do anything to hurt them. What is it? Can I help at all? I'd love to if I could——'

By the time they were rushing through Bishops Stortford Sally had told her everything. Incoherent and sobbing at first, there was something about this lady that comforted her into calmness. She wasn't at all like Mr. Thorpe, yet she took his sort of view, not Mr. Pinner's, and was even more sympathetic, and even more understanding. It really seemed, from the questions she asked, as if she must know the Lukes personally. She said she didn't, when Sally inquired if this were so, and laughed. She was very cheerful, and laughed several times, though she was so kind and sorry about everything.

'You can't go back there today, anyhow,' she said at last. 'Not into the middle of that party——' she laughed and shuddered, for Sally had explained with a face of horror that nobody at all was going to be at the party who wasn't either a lady or a gentleman except herself. 'You shall come and stay with me for a few days till your Mr. Luke goes to Cambridge, and then we'll see what happens. But I'm not going to let you go back into the clutches of that Mrs. Luke.'

And she leant forward and took her hand, and smiled so kindly and cheerfully, and said, 'You'll come for a day or two to our house, won't you? My father isn't there just now, and I've got it all to myself. Come till we have made up our minds about what to do next.'

This really seemed too good to be true. Sally turned scarlet. Was she saved? Saved, at the very last minute, from horror and disgrace?

'Just for a day or two,' said her new friend, who

couldn't take her eyes off Sally's face, 'till your husband can find somewhere for you to live. We'll help him to look. I'll come with you, and help to find something. No, it doesn't matter a bit about your not having any luggage—I can lend you everything. And we'll write to him if you like, and tell him you can't and won't stay with his mother. Don't you think this is quite the best plan? Don't you, Sally?'

And she smiled, and asked if she might call her Sally.

'But,' hesitated Sally, for she didn't want to get anybody into difficulties, 'Father says I'm a runaway wife, and 'e wouldn't 'arbour me 'imself because of that.'

'Oh, but somebody must. And I'm the very one for it, because I'm so respectable, and not a wife. Don't you worry, you lovely thing. We really must bring your Mr. Luke to his senses. By the way, hasn't he got a Christian name?'

'You never *'eard* such a name,' said Sally earnestly, who felt, to her own great surprise, almost as comfortable and easy with this strange lady as she had with Mr. Soper. 'Outlandish, I call it.'

Her new friend laughed again when she told her it was Jocelyn. 'Aren't you delicious,' she said, her bright eyes screwed up with laughter.

Sally liked being called delicious. It gave her assurance. Jocelyn had called her lots of things like that in his red-eared moments, but they hadn't done her much good, because they never seemed to go on into next day. This lady was quite in her ordinary senses, her ears were proper pale ears, and what she said sounded as though it would last. And how badly Sally needed reassurance after the things Mr. Pinner had said to her that morning!

'Now you come along with me,' said her friend, jumping up as the train ran into Liverpool Street, her eyes, which were like little black marbles, dancing. 'And please call me Laura, will you? Because it's my name.'

She leaned out of the window, and waved. A chauffeur came running down the platform and opened the door; a car was waiting; and in another minute Sally was in it, once more sunk in softness, and once more with a lovely fur rug over her knees, while sitting next to her, talking and laughing, was her new friend, and sitting opposite her, neither talking nor laughing, a smart young lady in black, carrying a bag, who had appeared from nowhere and wasn't taken any notice of, and who looked steadily out of the window.

'What a *day* I'm 'avin', thought Sally.

But when presently the car stopped at a big house in a great square with trees in the middle, and a footman appeared at the door, and in the hall Sally could see another one just like him, and then another, and yet another, she was definitely frightened.

'Oh lor,' she whispered, shrinking back into the car.

'No—Laura,' said her new friend, laughing and taking her hand; and drawing it through her arm she led her up the steps of the house, and into the middle of the first real fleshpots of her life.

§

Fleshpots.

She had thought her honeymoon was a honeymoon of fleshpots; she had been sure Almond Tree Cottage was the very home of them; but now she saw the real thing: fleshpots *in excelsis*.

Her father had said, 'Beware of fleshpots,' when he

was expounding the doings of the Children of Israel to her of a Sunday afternoon, 'they don't do no one no good.' And she had been brought up so carefully, so piously, so privately, that she had never come across that literature of luxury, those epics of fat things, that are lavishly provided for the poor and skimped. The flunkeys and the frocks, the country castles and the town palaces, the food, the jewels and the dukes, had remained outside her imaginative experience. What she had read had been her Bible, and a few books of her mother's childhood in which people were sad, and good and ill, and died saying things that made her cry very much. There was nothing to set her dreaming in these. Life, she thought, was like that, except for the lucky ones such as herself, who had kind parents and a nice back parlour to sit and sew in when their work was done. There were the gentry, of course; they existed, she knew, but only knew vaguely. Entirely vague they had been in her mind till she became a Luke, and found herself engulfed by them; and what an awe-inspiring engulfing it had seemed to her, with Ammond handing round everything at meals, and tea on a table you didn't sit up at!

Now, as her new friend's arm propelled her past the blank-faced footmen, across the great marble-floored and columned hall, she realised that Almond Tree Cottage had been the merest wheelbarrow in size and fittings compared to this. This was grand. More—this was terrible. It was her idea of a cathedral or a museum, but not of a place human beings washed their hands in, and talked out loud.

'P'raps,' she murmured to the lady called Laura, holding back as she was about to be taken into a room

which she could see at once she would never feel comfortable in, and where far away in the distance was another of those tables with tea on it that one didn't sit up at, ' p'raps, if you don't mind, I'd better be gettin' along after all——' for, being polite, she had forced herself to bow with a nervous smile to a gentleman in black, who was standing about and whose eye had met hers, and he hadn't taken any notice but looked as blank-faced as everybody else, and the rebuff had terribly embarrassed her.

' Come along,' was all Laura said to that, calling out over her shoulder to the same gentleman in black to see that a room was got ready for Mrs. Luke ; and he answered, as polite and mild as milk, ' Very good, m'lady——' so he was a servant, and Laura was one of those ladies Sally had heard her parents sometimes allude to with awe, who are always being told they're ladies every time any one speaks to them, and who were, so Mr. and Mrs. Pinner declared, the pick of the basket.

' P'raps,' murmured Sally again, faintly, for the thought of having got among the pick of the basket unnerved her, ' I'd best do what Father said, and take a taxi . . .'

' You shall if you really want to,' said Laura, ' but let's have tea first. And think of that party ! It's raging at this minute. Oh, Sally—could you bear it ? '

Sally sat down on the chair Laura pushed up for her. She sat down obediently, but only on the edge of it, her long slender legs tucked sideways, as one sits who isn't at ease. No, she couldn't bear to go back to that party ; nor could she, waiting till it was over, go back after it and face Mrs. Luke. It was more than flesh and blood could manage.

Then, that being so, and seeing that her father wouldn't have her, the only thing to do was to stay where she was till Usband went to Cambridge on Saturday, and be thankful she had this kind lady to be with, and try and swallow all the servants and marble, and do her best to behave grateful. It was only for a couple of days, for directly Usband got to Cambridge she would go after him as a wife should. Fallen on her feet wonderfully she had, Sally anxiously assured herself; but nevertheless, as she sat on the edge of her chair, and great pictures looked down at her from vast walls, she felt excessively uneasy.

'Tell me some more about the Lukes,' said Laura gaily, arranging a little table in front of her on which her cup and plate had a nice lot of room, and nothing got spilt or dropped. 'I think they're such fun.'

'Fun?' echoed Sally, her lips parting.

She stared at Laura. Fun? The Lukes?

'I never 'eard of a 'usband bein' fun,' she said in a very low voice, her head drooping.

'Perhaps that isn't quite the word,' said Laura, 'though I believe it's a very good way of approaching them.' And then she paused, teapot in hand, her eyes on Sally's face. 'I suppose,' she said, 'you know you're *the* most utterly beautiful thing?'

Whereupon Sally started, for this was the way Mrs. Luke had begun with her, and said quickly, even as she had said then, 'But I can't 'elp it.'

'Help it?' echoed Laura, astonished.

'People begins,' said Sally anxiously, 'with "Oh my, ain't you beautiful," and ends with bein' angry. It ain't as if I could '*elp* it,' she said, looking up at her new friend with eyes in which tears were gathering, for

it would be more than she could bear on her empty stomach—she had had no food since her breakfast in Mr. Thorpe's car—if she too were going to be angry with her.

Really such an extraordinary piece of good fortune as this had never yet come Laura's way.

§

Now was Sally shovelled up by chance from the bottom of the social ladder to the top, for Laura was the spinster daughter of a duke. He was so aged that, by sheer going on living, everything he had ever done, good and bad, had been forgotten, and at last he had become an object of universal respect. Ninety-three next birthday; a great age. And his eldest son, the prospective duke, was sixty-five,—a great age too for anything that is still prospective. He was a marquis, Sally learned with surprise presently, when she was having her tea and Laura, who perceived she needed soothing, was trying to distract her by telling her about her relations; for she failed to understand why he shouldn't be a duke. Pinners produced Pinners; why not dukes dukes?

But Laura said these things couldn't be explained, and hurried on.

The old duke had married three times, and Laura was the product of what the neat-phrased French would call the third bed. All the beds, first, second, and third, had long vanished, and of the third, which had been very fruitful, Laura, and her brother Charles, and her married sister Terry, were the only surviving traces. The second bed had been barren; the first had provided the heir, and three ancient ladies old enough to be Laura's

mothers, who were scattered over England in varying degrees of resignation, one being the widow of a bishop, another the widow of a Cabinet Minister, and the third not yet the widow of a club man and expert bridge-player, who never came home till next day.

'Why don't 'e?' asked Sally, manners seeming to demand that she should say something when, for an instant, her friend paused.

But Laura said these things couldn't be explained, and hurried on.

Much the liveliest of the beds had been the one she herself came out of, and her blood pressure—except during the last year of the War, when unceasing hard work, combined with a diet of practically continual boiled fish, reduced it to a comfortable normal—had always been higher than was convenient. This led her into excesses. She must be up and doing; she found it impossible to sit still. Vitality bubbled in her quick speech and danced in her black eyes. She was now thirty-five, round and stubby, fleet of foot and swift of reply, and her past was strewn with charities she had organised, dressmakers she had established, hat shops she had run, estate agencies she had started, hospital beds she had endowed, arts she had supported, geniuses she had discovered, and four lovers.

Four weren't many, she thought, considering the piles her sister Terry had got through. Laura's lovers had come and gone, as lovers do, and she hadn't minded much, because neither had they. There was something too electric about her for love. She seemed to crackle in their very arms. This disconcerted them; and each in his turn married some one else.

For a long time now she had been bored, and bored

violently, and by the time she came across Sally she had seen everything, been everything, heard everything and done everything; and the prospect of seeing and being and hearing and doing over and over again, till her joints cracked and her hair fell out, was boring her into fits.

Her father's three wives had been the daughters of millionaires, whose pride it was to leave them all their money. Her father, rich before, had thus become incredibly richer. England was full of him. And the war had only made him richer, because he owned coal mines. Such riches, Laura considered, were disgusting, and she had plunged into Socialism, and come up dripping Labour. But whatever she did, whatever she was, her chief job was to look after her father, and see that his last years were peaceful; and she had now only left him in Cambridgeshire, where they had been spending Easter, for a day or two, and rushed up to London because of being obliged to go to a charity ball of which she was a patroness, to the first night of a play whose author she was encouraging, to a bazaar in aid of the Black and Blue League, of which she was vice-president and whose aims were the assistance of wives, and, if possible, to look in at a concert being given by a young violinist she had helped to have trained: and she had been thinking, as she sat in the empty railway carriage between Crippenham and Cambridge—the expresses stopped at Crippenham when the Duke was in residence—that all this was a great bore.

What was the good of it, really? Oughtn't charity to be approached quite differently? Weren't bazaars essentially vicious? Did wives need assistance more than husbands? And there was her own stupid supper-party that night after the play, with the author coming

to it, and the leading lady, and Streatley her elder brother, who thought he admired the leading lady, and Terry her sister, who thought the author admired her, and Charles her younger brother, who was sure he admired nobody, and one or two others, including a dramatic critic ; and how too perfectly awful if the play was a failure, and there they all were, boxed up with the person who had written it.

'Silly life,' she had been thinking as the train ran into Cambridge. 'Round and round in a cage we go, and nothing is ever different except our whiskers, which keep on getting greyer.'

'But then,' she said leaning forward, her eyes twinkling and dancing as she looked at Sally, who by this time had finished her tea, 'the door opened and *you* got in. Too marvellous, Sally. Divinely beautiful. And not an h in your whole delicious composition.'

'Pardon ? ' said Sally, who hadn't quite got that.

§

She hadn't understood more than a word here and there of all the words Laura had rattled off at her, and in her heart, while she steadily ate sandwiches, she had slowly come to the conclusion that the pick of the basket was a queer fish. An affectionate and friendly fish, but queer all right, thought Sally ; and in spite of the good tea—the best she had ever had, outdoing the one at Truro, and infinitely better than any at Mrs. Luke's,—in spite of the calming and balancing effect of nourishment after not having had a bite to eat since five o'clock that morning, in spite of Laura's kindness and cheerfulness, Sally felt uneasy.

She oughtn't to be there. She oughtn't to have come

with Laura. It was only for two days, but two days were enough to do wrong in. What would her father say, who thought she was at that moment in a taxi, paid for by his pound, if he could see her? What would Mrs. Luke say? What *was* Mrs. Luke saying, anyhow? As for Mr. Luke, what he would say didn't so much matter, because almost before he had finished saying it she would have joined him in Cambridge, and started acting as a wife should. Of course he on his side must act as a husband should, and not try and send her away from him to his mother,—that was only fair, wasn't it? Sally anxiously asked herself.

And her uneasiness became acute when Laura, having taken her up a whole lot of stairs, every one of which looked like pure marble, and into a room she could only guess was a bedroom because there was a bed in it, but which was otherwise unidentifiable to Sally as such, sat down at a table and began telephoning to people to send round somebody at once with dresses and shoes to be tried on a young lady, who had to wear them that very evening.

Sally listened in alarm. Impossible not to guess that she was the young lady; impossible not to gather that there was to be a party, and she was to be at it. Had she after all only escaped Mrs. Luke's party to find herself caught in another? Was Laura, who had so much sympathised with her earnest wish not to be present at the one, going to plunge her into the other?

Standing afraid and conscience-stricken in front of the blazing wood fire, while Laura telephoned—this all came of not obeying her father—Sally wondered whether anything could save her. Laura had saved her from Mrs. Luke, but who was going to save her from Laura?

Laura lived in the middle of marble. She had servants at her beck and call, and could make the gentleman in black do anything she chose. And the smart young lady, who had sat on the small seat of the car and looked out of the window, presently, on Laura's telling her to, crawled round the floor at Sally's feet with her mouth full of pins, doing something to a petticoat of Laura's that Sally, it seemed, was going to have to wear that evening.

'All you've got to do, Sally,' said Laura, having finished telephoning, and coming briskly over to where her newest discovery was standing meekly without her frock and hat, while the petticoat was pinned narrower, 'is to enjoy yourself. Oh, you lovely, *lovely* thing!' she burst out, beating her hands together with delight; for the more one took off Sally the more exquisite she became.

Enjoy herself? She, a married woman? 'Wonder 'ow,' thought Sally.

'Say what you like, do what you like,' said Laura, her eyes bulging with admiration, 'and don't care about anybody or anything. Don't you bother about h's, or silly things like that. Just say whatever comes into your darling, delicious head, and enjoy yourself.'

In the presence of the young lady crawling on the floor, Sally was dumb. Laura, on the other hand, talked just as if she weren't there; but when for a moment Sally found herself alone with Laura, she did make a mild protest.

'Might 'ave gone back to that there other party after all,' she said, 'an' done what Father tell me, if I got to be at one any'ow.'

'Oh, but this isn't a party,' Laura hastily assured her,

for Sally was distinctly drooping. 'This is a theatre. You like going to a play, don't you, Sally? Of course you do. I simply don't believe the girl exists who doesn't.'

Yes; Sally liked going to a play. She hadn't ever been to one, and the idea of a theatre did cheer her up. And Laura said nothing about the supper afterwards, because why say everything?

§

They went, then, to the first night of Mr. Gillespie's new play. Sally was astonished when Laura, and the maid, and the head lady from Paquille's and her two assistants, had finished with her and bade her look at herself in the glass.

'That me?' she asked, her lips parting and her eyes widening, for it might have been a real grand lady. And she added doubtfully, 'I ain't 'alf bare.'

Laura, however, was just as bare, and there was ever so much more of her to be bare with, so she supposed it must be all right; but she did wonder what her father would say if he could see her now—'Oh, my *goodness*,' shuddered Sally, her mind slinking away from the thought.

They had dressed her in a cloud of blue tulle over a cloud of green tulle. Her loveliness was startling. It was like nothing either Laura or the lady from Paquille's had ever seen, and they had seen most of what there was of existing beauty. Even the maid, an expert in repression, showed excitement. And presently when the Paquille lady wrapped the cloak round her that went with that frock, and, swathed in its green and silver, she looked like a white flower in a slender sheath of green, Laura fairly danced with delight to think what Terry

would say, who was used to being so much prettier than anybody else, and what Charles would say, who long had declared there was no such thing as real beauty, and Streatley, who said the women nowadays couldn't hold a candle to the women of his youth, and everybody.

Such a find, such a haul, such a piece of luck had never yet befallen Laura. And the mischievous pleasure she took in thinking of the effect it was going to have on her relations and of the upsetting results it was going to produce, was all the more surprising because, at the bottom of her heart, she was devoted to them.

§

Among the opera-glasses that raked Sally as she followed Laura into the stage box three minutes before the curtain went up on Mr. Gillespie's new play, were Terry's. She was in the stalls, with the young man who just then was, as the Pinners would have said, walking out with her. He too was looking at Sally.

'Laura's latest,' remarked Terry, turning to him after a prolonged incredulous stare at the astonishing contents of the box; for Laura was well known for her successive discoveries of every kind—saints, geniuses, rugged men of labour—each of which, after a brief blare of publicity, disappeared and was not heard of again.

The young man's face, however, had the kind of expression on it as he looked at Sally that is apt to annoy the woman one is with; and Terry, who was strictly monogamous during each of her affairs, and expected the other person to be so too, didn't like it.

'Who is she?' asked her young friend.

'God knows,' said Terry, shrugging her shoulders.

The curtain went up and the lights went down, and

Sally disappeared into the darkness. When next she was visible, Charles Moulsford and Lord Streatley had joined their sister in the box. They were talking to Sally. She was politely smiling. The house had eyes for nothing else.

'Who *is* she?' asked Terry's young friend again, with a warmer insistence.

'You'd better go and ask her,' said Terry, cross.

'All right, I will,' said her young friend; and got up and left her; for by this time she had been monogamous with him for six months, and he long had wished she would love him less.

The other three acts of the play took place in bright summer weather, and the glorious sunshine on the stage lit up Sally too in the stage box. The house had eyes only for her. Mr. Gillespie's play accordingly fell flat. Nobody called for him at the end, what applause there was was absent-minded, and next morning the leading newspaper, after a perfunctory *résumé* of that which it unkindly described as the alleged plot, ended by remarking languidly, 'Mr. Gillespie must try again.'

It was a strange evening. The actors, who began well, seemed to get more and more bloodless as the play proceeded. Mr. Gillespie, crouching in the darkest corner of the box above Laura's, a shelter out of which nothing would have dragged him except the most frenzied cries of enthusiasm, couldn't imagine what was the matter with his players; but they had felt almost at once that no notice was being taken of them, and presently, discovering the reason, a blight settled on them, and its ravages, as the evening went on, became more marked. By the end there was practically complete anaemia, and Mr. Gillespie, fleeing from the theatre before the final curtain

so as to see and hear nothing more, so as to get away, so as to meet neither managers nor actors, so as to wipe from his mind that he had ever written plays, or ever hoped, or ever believed, or ever had dreams and ambitions, went straight for comfort to his friend Lady Laura Moulsford, who had been so kind and encouraging, and who had told him to come round to her that evening, laughingly promising to have the laurels ready.

Laurels! Poor Mr. Gillespie now only wanted to hide his head in her kind lap. He winced to remember how happily he too had laughed, how sure he had been. But that was because of the great success of his first play; and this one, his second, was twenty times better, and was going to be twenty times greater a success.

And so it would have been except for Sally. When, presently, after he had waited three quarters of an hour alone in the library at Goring House because Sally was being so much crowded round coming out of the theatre that it took all that time to extricate her and get her away, she came in with Laura and Laura's brothers, he instantly realised what had happened; and even as Mr. Soper hadn't grudged her his stew, though feeling aggrieved, so did Mr. Gillespie, though feeling heart-broken, not grudge her the laurels that should have been his.

He turned very red; he bent low over her hand when Laura introduced him; he murmured, 'I lay my failure at your feet and glory in it,'—this being the way Mr. Gillespie talked; and Sally, nervous and bewildered, but indomitably polite, said, 'Pardon?'

§

She kept on saying 'Pardon?' that evening. She found it difficult to follow the things they all said. They were kind, and seemed to want to make her happy, but their language was obscure. So was Mr. Luke's, if it came to that, only he, except at intervals, wasn't kind. No, she couldn't call Mr. Luke a kind man; but then he was her husband, and these weren't, though they all behaved, she thought, rather as if they would like to be,—that is, there were curious and unmistakable resemblances between their way of looking at her and speaking to her and Jocelyn's when he was courting. Lords, too, two of them. Who would have thought lords would forget themselves like this? For they knew she was married, and that it was sheer sin to look at her as though they were going to be husbands. And they so grand and good in the newspapers, making speeches, and opening hospitals! Sally was much shocked. One of them was very old; he couldn't, she decided, be far off his dying breath. Oughtn't he to be thinking what he was going to do about it, instead of sitting up late at a party behaving as if he would like to be a husband?

The only thing that comforted her for being at a party after all was that Jocelyn wasn't there. She felt she could manage parties much best single-handed, without him watching and being angry. None of these people were angry, or minded about how she spoke; on the contrary, they seemed to like it, and laughed,—except one, the younger lord, who sat as grave as a church. There was, when all was said and done, a certain feeling of space in being without one's husband; and after she

had drunk a little champagne,—a very little, because it was so nasty, and reminded her of fizzy lemonade gone bad—this feeling of space increased, and she was able to listen to the things the gentlemen kept on saying to her with the same mild patience, tinged with regret, with which on her one visit to the Zoo she had contemplated the behaviour of the monkeys. Laura's relations seemed to Sally, as she sat listening to them, as difficult to account for as the monkeys. One couldn't account for them. But even as these, she reminded herself, they belonged to God.

'They're God's,' Mr. Pinner had said that day at the Zoo, when asked by her to explain why the monkeys behaved in the way they did; and that being so there was nothing further to worry about.

As for Laura, whose heart, being a Moulsford's, was good, though it sometimes in moments of excitement forgot to be, she had several qualms during that evening, and soon began to think that perhaps she oughtn't to have kidnapped Sally, or, having kidnapped her, ought to have kept her hidden till she took her to Cambridge and handed her over to her husband.

Yet she was even more of an overwhelming success than Laura had expected. Streatley was idiotic about her, Charles had fallen in love at last, Mr. Gillespie worshipped and forgave, the dramatic critic was fatuous, Terry was indignant, and the leading lady had been so furious when she saw Sally in the box, and knew why she herself and the play were being failures, that she had refused to come round to supper.

'What a success,' thought Laura, looking round her table, the vacant place at which was filled by Lady Streatley, who had drifted in unexpectedly because

she didn't see why Streatley should make a fool of himself with that actress woman unchecked. She had come to check him, and found him needing checking at an entirely different pair of feet. 'What a *success*,' thought Laura, suddenly ashamed.

'And so you ought to be,' said her brother Charles after supper, when she—they were great friends—took him aside and told him she somehow felt ashamed. 'You're a little fool, Laura, and never see further than the end of your silly nose. I should get rid of a few of your good intentions if I were you.'

'But she was so unhappy,' said Laura, trying to justify herself.

'You wouldn't have cared in the very least if she had been plain,' said Charles.

'Am I as bad as all that?' asked Laura.

'Every bit,' said Charles, who was annoyed because of the way Sally was disturbing him.

Indeed, the way Sally was disturbing everybody was most unfortunate. Here was a united and affectionate family, the three younger ones almost filially devoted to their elder brother, all four of them with the warmest hearts, which, though they led them into situations Terry's husband and Streatley's wife might dislike, never for an instant dimmed their fraternal affections and loyalties. Not one of them would willingly have hurt the others. All were most goodnatured, doing what they could to make everybody happy. Laura was really benevolent; Theresa was really kind; Charles was really unselfish; and Streatley so really affectionate that he could still, at sixty-five, love several women at once, including his wife.

How annoying for Charles, for instance, who was so

fond of his brother, and had looked on with bland detachment at his successive infatuations, suddenly to find he was competing with him. Competing with Streatley! And not only competing, but saying to himself that he was an ancient ass. Charles was horrified to find himself thinking Streatley an ancient ass; but he was even more horrified when he quite soon afterwards discovered he was definitely desirous of strangling him. That was because of the way he looked at Sally. It made Charles's hitherto affectionate fingers itch to strangle him.

And how annoying for Lady Streatley to see her elderly husband making yet another fool of himself. He had made so many fools of himself over women that it was to be supposed she would by now have got used to it. Not at all. She was each time as profoundly upset as ever. And this time it was really dreadful, because the girl was hardly more than a child. Oughtn't he to be thoroughly ashamed of himself?

'I wish you could see the expression on your face,' she murmured acidly to him, as they got up from the supper-table and gathered round the fire.

'Leave my face alone,' he growled, looking at her furiously; and that she should be acid and he should growl and look at her furiously was distressing to Lady Streatley, who was the most amiable of women, and knew that he was the most naturally kind of men.

And then Terry, so affectionate and faithful to her young friend Robert,—for her to have to look on while he forgot her very existence and sat on the floor at somebody else's feet, his rapt gaze fixed unswervingly on a face that wasn't hers, was most annoying. He had insisted on coming round with her to Laura's party,

though she refused at first to bring him. So violently determined was he, however, that he assured her she would never see him again if she didn't take him round with her; and Terry, cowed, as many a fond woman had been before her by this threat, gave in, and spent the evening in a condition of high indignation.

It was Laura, though, with whom she was indignant, —Laura, the sister she had always so much loved, who had arranged the whole thing so as to set everybody by the ears. She forgave Robert—they had got to the stage when she was continually forgiving him, and he was continually hoping she wouldn't—for how could he help it if this artful young woman from the slums laid herself out to beguile him? It was all Laura's fault. Terry couldn't have believed her goodnatured sister had it in her to be so wickedly mischievous. What devil had taken possession of her? First dressing the girl up and spoiling poor Jack Gillespie's play with her, and then getting them all there to supper, so as to make fools of them. . . .

'I hope you're pleased with your detestable party,' she said, leaning against the chimney piece, staring in wrathful disgust at the circle round Sally, who, glancing shyly and furtively every now and then at the lovely dark lady dressed like a rose, thought she must surely be the most beautiful lady in the whole world, but feeling, judged Sally, a bit on the sick side that evening,—probably eaten something.

'I'm not at all pleased,' snapped Laura, 'and I wish to goodness you'd all go home.'

That, however, was exactly what they couldn't bear to do. Hours passed, and Laura's party still went on. The men were unable to tear themselves away from

Sally, whose every utterance—she said as little as possible, but couldn't avoid answering direct questions—filled them with fresh delight, and the two women, Terry and her aggrieved sister-in-law, were doggedly determined to stay as long as they did.

'If she weren't so lovely,' murmured Lady Streatley to the indignant Terry, when a roar of laughter, in which the loudest roar was Streatley's, succeeded something Sally, tired and bewildered, had said in answer to a question, 'I suppose they wouldn't see anything at all in that Cockney talk.'

'They'd think it unendurable,' said Terry shortly.

'But you see,' said Laura, who was cross with Terry, 'she happens to be the most beautiful thing any of us have ever seen.'

'Oh, I quite see she's very beautiful,' said poor Lady Streatley, who had given Streatley seven children and was no longer the woman she was.

'If one *likes* that sort of thing,' said Terry, descending in her anger to primitive woman.

'Which one evidently does,' said Laura maliciously, glancing at the infatuated group.

'Men are such fools,' said Terry.

'Babies,' sighed Lady Streatley.

Only once did Charles, who was the greatest contrast to his brother, being lean and brown and goodlooking and not much past thirty, besides remaining grave on all the occasions that evening when his brother laughed, for Charles was fastidious as well as sympathetic, and Sally's accent didn't amuse him, and he hated to see her unwittingly amusing the other four infatuated fools,—only once did he get her a moment to himself, and then only for a minute or two, while there was some slight

rearrangement of positions because of the bringing in of a tray of drinks.

When he did, this was the conversation :

'I believe,' said Charles in a low voice, 'you're every bit as beautiful inside as you are out.'

'Me ?' said Sally with weary surprise—by this time she was deadly tired—for she hadn't thought of bodies as reversible. 'Ain't I all pink ?'

'Pink ?' echoed Charles, not at first following. Then he said rather hastily, being queasy and without Streatley's robust ability to enjoy anything, 'I mean your spirit. It's just as divinely beautiful as your face. I'm sure it is. I'm sure you never have a thought that isn't lovely——'

And he went on to murmur—why on earth he should say these inanities he couldn't think, and was much annoyed to hear them coming out—that he hoped her husband loved her as she deserved.

'You never *see* such lovin',' said Sally earnestly, who didn't mind this one of the gentlemen as much as the others.

'Oh, I can imagine it,' said Charles, again hastily ; and wanted to know whether, then, her husband wouldn't be excessively unhappy, not having an idea where she was.

'Dunno about un'appy,' said Sally, knitting her brows a little—Charles was deeply annoyed to discover how much he wished to kiss them—for she hadn't thought of unhappiness in connection with her brief and strictly temporary withdrawal. 'Angry's more like it.'

'Angry ?' said Charles, incredulously. 'Angry with you ?'

'Gets angry a lot, Mr. Luke do,' said Sally, bowing

her exquisite little head in what Charles regarded as a lovely but misplaced acquiescence. 'Except,' she added, anxious to be accurate, 'when 'e begins oh-Sallyin'.'

This ended the conversation. Charles couldn't go on. He was queasy. He didn't need to ask what oh-Sallying was. He could guess. And, as he shuddered, the desire he had to strangle Streatley was supplemented by a desire to save Sally,—to seize and carry her off, out of reach of indignities and profanities, and hide her away in some pure refuge of which only he should have the key.

XII

§

He couldn't, however, do that; but he could carry her off next day in his car into the country for a few hours, away from London and the advances Streatley would be sure to try to make, and everybody else would be sure to try to make who should meet her if she stayed with Laura.

Next day was Friday; and his chief, one of the leading lights of the Cabinet, to whom he was the most devoted and enthusiastic of private secretaries, was going away for the week-end. Charles would be free. Walking up and down his room, unable to go to bed, he decided he would drive his car himself round to his father's house the first thing in the morning, not taking the chauffeur, and get hold of Sally before anyone else did. For one whole day he would be alone with her. One day. It wasn't much to take out of her life, just one day?

Charles was in love. How not be? He was in love from the first moment he saw the radiant beauty in Laura's box at the play, and his love had survived, though it took on a tinge of distress, their brief conversation. But it became a passion when she broke up Laura's party at last by suddenly tumbling off her chair in a faint and lying crumpled on the

floor at his feet, her eyes shut and her mouth a little open, and her hands flung out, palm upwards, in a queer defencelessness.

There had been a rush to help, and he had actually shoved Streatley away with a vicious intention of really hurting him, so unendurable had it been to him to think of those great hairy hands, besmirched by a hundred love affairs, touching the child; and it was he who had picked her up and carried her upstairs, followed by Laura, and laid her on her bed.

'I'm *ashamed* of you,' he had said to Laura under his breath as he turned and walked out of the room, shocked at such brutal exploiting of an exhausted child.

'But so am I, so am I——' Laura had answered distractedly, running to the bell and frantically ringing for her maid; and Sally lay on the bed like a folded flower, thought Charles, stirred by passion into poetic images, and at least for the moment safe in unconsciousness from the screaming, tearing, grabbing world.

The next morning, then, when Laura came down punctually at nine o'clock to breakfast—for however late she went to bed her restless vitality, once it was broad daylight, prevented her being able to stay there, which made her unpopular in country houses,—she found Charles in the dining-room, standing with his back to the fire.

'How much you must love me,' she remarked sarcastically, being, after a bad night, a little cross.

'I don't love you at all at this moment,' said Charles.

'Then is it breakfast you want?'

'No,' said Charles.

'Can it be Sally?'

'Yes,' said Charles.

'Fancy,' said Laura; and poured herself out some coffee.

'How is she?' asked Charles after a pause, ignoring such silliness.

'Oh, quite well,' said Laura. 'She was tired last night.'

'Tired! I should think so,' said Charles severely. 'I've come to ask her if she will let me take her into the country for the day. It's my intention to get her away from your crowd for a few hours.'

'Rescue her, in fact,' said Laura, munching, her back to him.

'Exactly,' said Charles, who was angry.

'I expect Tom'—Tom was Lord Streatley—'will be here soon, wanting to rescue her too,' remarked Laura, glancing out of the window to where she could see Charles's touring car standing, and no chauffeur. '*He* won't bring his chauffeur either. Have some?' she asked, holding up the coffee-pot.

'Can't you be a little beast when you give your mind to it,' said Charles.

'Well, you scolded me last night because *I* had rescued her, and now here you are——'

Laura broke off, and hastily drank some coffee. She didn't really want to quarrel with Charles; she never had yet. In fact, till Sally appeared on the scene she had never quarrelled with any of her family. Besides in her heart, though she was cross that morning, not having slept well for the first time for years because of being worried and conscience-stricken and anxious, she was glad that Charles should take Sally off her hands. She had so much to do that day, so many important engagements; and if Sally went with her everybody

would instantly be upset, and if she left her at home she would be a prey to Streatley. Other people wishing to prey on her could be kept out by a simple order to the servants, but not her own brother. And Streatley, when he was infatuated, was a gross creature, and there would be more trouble and wretchedness for poor Kitty his wife, let alone God knowing what mightn't happen to Sally.

If Sally had to be with one or the other of them, Charles was far the better; but what a very great pity it was, Laura thought as she pretended to be absorbed in her breakfast, that she hadn't let her go back the day before to where she belonged. It wasn't any sort of fun quarrelling with her dearest brother Charles, and seeing him look as if he hadn't slept a wink. Besides, Sally was going to have a baby. At least, so she had informed Laura during the night, basing her conviction on the close resemblance between her behaviour in fainting, and her subsequent behaviour when she came to in being violently sick, and the behaviour of somebody called Mrs. Ooper, who had lived next door at Islington, and every spring, for seven years running, had fainted just like that and then been sick,—and sure as fate, Sally had told Laura in a feeble murmur, there at Christmas in each of those seven years had been another little baby.

'*I* don't want no doctor,' she had whispered, putting out a cold hand and catching at Laura's arm when, dismayed at Sally's sickness just as they had at last been able to undress her and get her into bed, she was running to the telephone to call hers up.

'But, my darling,' Laura had said, bending over her and smoothing back the hair from her damp forehead

with quick, anxious movements, ' he'll give you something to make you well again.'

' No, 'e won't,' Sally had whispered, looking up at her with a faint, proud smile, ' 'cos I ain't ill. *I* know wot's 'appenin' all right. It's a little baby.'

And then she had told Laura, who had to stoop down close to hear, about Mrs. Ooper.

Well, Laura didn't know much about babies before they were born, but she was sure a person who was expecting any ought to be with her husband. She couldn't kidnap whole families ; she hadn't bargained for more than one Luke. And during the few hours that remained of the night, after she had seen Sally go off to sleep with an expression of beatitude on her face, she had tossed about in her own bed in a fever of penitence.

When would she learn not to interfere ? When would she learn to hang on to her impulses, and resist sudden temptation ? Up to then she had never even tried to. And a vision of what Sally's unfortunate young husband must be feeling, and of course his mother too, who might be tiresome but hadn't deserved this, produced the most painful sensations in Laura's naturally benevolent heart.

She would make amends,—oh, she would make amends. She would take Sally to Cambridge herself on Saturday, when she was through with her London engagements, and find rooms for her, and explain everything to the young man, and beg his pardon. Perhaps, too, she could tell him a little of Sally's fear of his mother, and perhaps she might be able to persuade him not to let her live with them ; for Laura had often noticed, though each time, being a member of the Labour Party, with shame and regret, that the persuasions of the

daughter of a duke are readily listened to. But she didn't want to make amends that day,—she was too busy; and she couldn't send a telegram, or anything like that, letting the Lukes know where Sally was, because it would only bring them about her ears in hordes, and she simply hadn't time that day for hordes. Laura's intentions, that is, were admirable, but deferred.

'Isn't she coming down?' asked Charles at last, for Laura, with her back to him pretending to eat her breakfast, had said no more.

'She's having breakfast upstairs,' said Laura.

'Why didn't you tell me?' he asked, annoyed.

'Because you say I'm a little beast, so I may as well do the thing thoroughly.'

Charles went across to the bell.

'No—don't ring,' said Laura jumping up. 'I'll go and tell her.' And she went to the door, but hesitated, and came back to him, and laid her hand on his arm.

He withdrew his arm.

'Charles—are you so angry with me?' she asked.

'You've behaved simply disgracefully,' he answered in a voice of deep disgust. 'You would sacrifice anybody to provide your friends with a new sensation.'

Laura looked at him. It was true; or had been true. But she wasn't going to ever any more, she was going to turn over a new leaf—next day, when she had finished with all her tiresome and important engagements.

'You sacrificed that child'—began Charles, passionately indignant when he thought of the unconscious figure on the floor.

'Don't *you* sacrifice her,' interrupted Laura. And when Charles stared at her, too angry for speech, she

added hastily, 'Oh, don't let's quarrel, Charles darling. I'm sure you'll take the greatest care of her. I'll go and fetch her. Drive slowly, won't you—and bring her back safe. Tomorrow I'm going to hand her over to her husband.'

§

Now in his heart Charles knew that this was the only right thing to do. Sally ought never to have been taken away from her husband, and, having been taken, ought to be returned to him. At once. Not tomorrow, but at once. He didn't know the circumstances, except what Laura had hurriedly told him the night before after supper, about having found her in a train, dissolved in tears because her father was sending her back to a mother-in-law who was awful to her, and she had brought her home with her just to comfort her, just to let her recover; but it was plain that such conduct on Laura's part was indefensible. If ever anybody ought to be safe at home it was Sally. She should be taken there without losing a moment. Disgraceful of Laura to put it off for another day and night, while she kept her fool engagements. Having behaved so wickedly, she ought, without losing an hour, to set things straight again.

Charles felt strongly about Laura's conduct; yet, though he himself could have set things straight by simply driving Sally back to the Lukes that morning, he didn't do so. That was because he couldn't. He was in love, and therefore couldn't.

There are some things it is impossible to do when you are in love, thought Charles, who recognised and admitted his condition, and one is to hand over the beloved to a brute. Luke was a brute. Clearly he was,

from what Sally had said the night before. He was either angry—angry with that little angel!—or he oh-Sallied. A cold shudder ran down Charles's spine. The thought made him feel really sick, for he was a tender-stomached as well as a tender-hearted young man, and possessed an imagination which was sometimes too lively for comfort. It wouldn't be *his* hand that delivered her up to a young brute; nor, he suddenly determined, on the butler's hurrying out to Laura, who was standing on the steps seeing him and Sally off, and saying with urgency, 'Lord Streatley to speak to Mrs. Luke on the telephone,' would it be his hand that delivered her up to an old one. At once on hearing the message he started the car, and was out of the square before Laura could say anything. There was Sally, tucked up beside him in Laura's furs, and looking more beautiful in broad sunshine even than he remembered her the night before,—a child of light and grace if ever there was one, thought Charles, a thing of simple sweetness and obedience and trust; and was he going to bring her back to another evening's exploitation by his sister and her precious friends, with that old scoundrel, his elder brother, all over her?

Never, said Charles to himself; and headed his car for Crippenham.

§

Crippenham was where his father was. What so safe as a refuge for Sally as his father? He was ninety-three, and he was deaf. A venerable age; a convenient failing. Convenient indeed in this case, for the Duke, like Charles, took little pleasure in the speech of the lower classes. Also he was alone there till Laura

should come back to him on the following day, because nobody was ever invited to Crippenham, which was his yearly rest-cure, and nobody ever dared even try to disturb its guarded repose.

Charles felt that it was, besides being the only, the very place. Here Sally could be kept remote and hidden till Laura—not he; he wouldn't be able to do such a thing—restored her to where she belonged; here she would be safe from the advances of Streatley, who couldn't follow her anywhere his father was, because the old man had an aversion to the four surviving fruits of his first marriage, and freely showed it; and here he would have her to himself for a whole evening, and part at least of the next day.

Also, it would serve Laura right. She would get a fright, and think all sorts of things had happened when they didn't come back. Well, thought Charles, she deserved everything she got. Under the cloak of protecting and comforting Sally she had been completely selfish and cruel. Charles was himself astonished at the violence of his feelings towards Laura, with whom he had always been such friends. He didn't investigate these feelings, however; he didn't investigate any of his other feelings either, not excepting the one he had when he asked Sally, soon after they had turned the corner out of the square, if she were warm enough, and she looked up shyly at him, and smiled as she politely thanked him, for his feelings since the evening before no longer bore investigation. They were a mixed lot, a strong lot. And it vexed Charles to know that even as early in the day as this, and not much after half past nine in the morning, he wished to kiss Sally.

This wasn't at all the proper spirit of rescue. He

drove in silence. He couldn't remember having wished to kiss a woman before at half past nine in the morning, and it annoyed him.

Sally, of course, was silent too. Not for her to speak without being spoken to, and she sat mildly wondering that she should be going along in a car at all. Laura had come up to her bedroom and said her brother was there, wanting to take her out for a little fresh air. Do her good, Laura had said, though Sally had never known good come of fresh air yet; but, passive as a parcel, she had let herself be taken. Why, however, she should be going for a joy-ride with this lord she didn't know, though she supposed it was as good a way as another of getting through the intimidating day among the picks of the basket, and anyhow this way there was only one of them, and anyhow he wasn't the big old one with the hairs on his hands.

Queer lot, these picks, thought Sally. Didn't seem to have anything to do to keep them at home; seemed to spend their time going somewhere else. Fidgety. And a vision of her own life as it was going to be once she was settled in those rooms at Cambridge, getting ready for her little baby, and cleaning up, and making things cosy for her man, flooded her heart with a delicious warmth. Laura had promised to help her find the rooms, and take her to where Mr. Luke would be. Mr. Luke wouldn't be angry any more now, thought Sally—he'd be too pleased about the little baby; and Laura seemed to know exactly where they would find him, and had assured her he wouldn't want to have Mrs. Luke living with them. Laura was queer too, in Sally's eyes, but good. Indeed Sally, feeling very much the married woman after what had happened the evening before,

feeling motherly already, feeling exalted by the coming of her baby to a height immensely above mere spinsterhood, went so far as to say to herself of Laura, with indulgent affection, ' Nice kid.'

§

They lunched at Thaxted. It was still only half past twelve, and Charles had managed to be three hours doing the forty odd miles. There was a beautiful church at Thaxted in which he could linger with her, for he didn't want to get to Crippenham till tea-time, and Crippenham was only about nine miles beyond Cambridge, off the Ely road between Waterbeach and Swaffham Prior.

Up to Thaxted, Charles was filled with an embarrassingly strong desire to appropriate Sally for ever to himself. He hadn't an idea how to do it, but that was his wish. She sat there silent, beautiful beyond his dreams —and how often and how wistfully had he not dreamt of what a woman's beauty might be !—pathetic, defenceless in the midst of a rudely jostling, predatory world, like a child with a priceless pearl in its hand among the poor and hungry, and he passionately loved her. As the miles increased, so did Charles's passion. He looked at her sideways, and each time with a fresh throb of wonder. He wove dreams about her ; he saw visions of magic casements and perilous seas, and she behind them, protected, guarded, worshipped by him alone ; his soul was filled with poetry ; he was lifted above himself by this Presence, this Manifestation ; he thought in terms of music ; the whole of England sang.

But at Thaxted he felt different, and began to think Sally ought to be with those she belonged to ; and by the

time it was evening, and he was meditating alone in the garden at Crippenham, he was quite sure of it.

At Thaxted he ordered the best lunch he could—Sally's mouth watered as she listened,—and while it was being got ready he took her into the church. She was inattentively polite. The brisk movements of a big, close-cropped man in a cassock, who strode busily about and made what seemed to Sally a curtsey each time he crossed the middle aisle, appeared to interest her much more than Charles's remarks on the clear, pale beauty of the building. It was rather like taking a dog to look at things. Charles didn't consciously think this, but there was an unawareness about Sally when faced by the beauties of Thaxted Church, and when faced, coming down, by the beauties of certain bits of the country that singing April morning, which was very like, Charles subconsciously thought, the unawareness of a dog. Ah, but how far, far more beautiful she herself was than anything else, he thought; how exquisite she looked in Laura's chinchilla wrap, with the exalted thoughts of the men who had built the church, thoughts frozen into the delicate greys, and silvers, and rose-colours of that fair wide place, for her background.

The man in the cassock left off doing whatever he was doing on catching sight of Sally, and, after looking at her a moment, came up and offered, his eyes on her face, to show them round the church; a little cluster of Americans dissolved, and flowed towards her; and a woman dressed like a nun broke off her prayers, and presently sidled up to where she stood.

Charles removed her.

Thaxted is a quiet place, and he strolled with her through its streets till their food should be ready. Its

streets, quiet to begin with, didn't stay quiet. The people of Thaxted, for some reason incomprehensible to Charles, because no two women could be more unlike, seemed to think Sally was Mary Pickford. He heard whispers to that effect. Did they then think, too, that he was the person known, he understood, as Doug ?

He removed her a second time.

Perhaps the inn was as good a place as any to wait in. He had, however, to engage a private room for their lunch, because so many people came in and wished to lunch too ; and it was when Sally had eaten a great deal of greengage tart and cream—bottled greengages, Charles feared, but she said she liked them—and drunk a great deal of raspberry syrup which had, he was sure, never been near real raspberries and couldn't be very good for her, and then, while he was having coffee and she tea—he had somehow stumbled on the fact that she liked tea after meals, and he watched with concern the strength and number of the cups she drank—it was then that she began to thaw, and to talk.

Alas, that she should. Alas, that she didn't remain for ever silent, wonderful, mysterious, of God.

Once having started thawing, it wasn't in Sally's generous nature to stop. She thawed and thawed, and Charles became more and more afflicted. Lord Charles—so, the night before, she had learned he was called—was evidently a chip off the same block as her friend Laura ; kind, that is. See what a lovely dinner he was giving her. Also he had been much more like a gentleman that day, and less like somebody who wanted to be a husband ; and after the greengage tart she began to warm up, and by the time she had got to the cups of tea she felt great confidence in Charles.

'Kind, ain't you,' she said with her enchanting smile, when he suggested, much against his convictions, another pot of tea.

'Isn't everybody ?' asked Charles.

'Does their best,' said Sally charitably. 'But it's up 'ill all the way for some as I could mention.'

By this time Charles was already feeling chilled. The raspberry syrup and the cups of strong tea had estranged him. This perfect girl, he thought, ought to be choice too in her food, ought instinctively to reject things out of bottles, and have no desire for a second helping of obviously bad pastry. Still, she was very young. He too, at Eton, had liked bad tuck. After all, queer as it seemed, she had only got to the age he was at then.

He made excuses for her; and, it appearing to him important that he should be in possession of more facts about her than those Laura had told him the evening before, said encouragingly, 'Do mention them.'

Sally did. She mentioned everybody and everything; and soon he knew as much about her hasty marriage, hurried on within a fortnight to the first man who came along, her return from her honeymoon to South Winch, the determination of her mother-in-law to keep her apart from her husband, her flight, helped by her father-in-law, back to her father, his rejection of her, and her intention to rejoin her husband next day at Cambridge whether he liked it or not, as he could bear.

He couldn't bear much. It wasn't only how she said it, but what she said. Charles, who had at first been afflicted by her language, was now afflicted by her facts. He shifted uneasily in his chair. He smoked cigarette after cigarette. His thin brown face was flushed, and he looked distressed. In that strange, defective, yet all

too vivid speech which he so deeply deplored, she drew for him a picture of what seemed sheer exploitation, culminating in his own sister's flinging herself hilariously into the game. This child; this helpless child, who would obey anybody, go anywhere, do anything she was told—in Charles's eyes, as he listened and drew her out, she became the most pathetic thing on earth. Everybody, it appeared, first grabbed at her and then wanted to get rid of her. Everybody; himself too. Yes, he too had grabbed at her, under a mealy-mouthed pretence of helping her, and now he too wanted—not to get rid of her, that seemed too violent, too brutal a way of putting it, but to hand her over, to pass her on, to send her back to that infernal young Luke, who himself was trying to escape from her and leave her to his mother. And the courage of the child! It was the courage of ignorance, of course, but still it seemed to Charles a lovely thing, that was afraid of nothing, of no discomfort, of no hard work, if only she might be with her husband in their own home. Charles discovered that that was Sally's one wish, and that her simple ambition appeared to be to do what she called work her fingers to the bone on behalf of that odious youth.

'Mr. Luke,' said Sally, who was unacquainted with any reason why she shouldn't say everything she knew to anyone who wished to hear, 'Mr. Luke, 'e thinks 'e can't afford a 'ome yet for me, and so——'

'Then he oughtn't to have married you,' flashed out Charles, infuriated by the young brute.

'Seemed 'e couldn't 'elp it,' said Sally. 'Seemed as if it 'ad to be. 'E——'

'Oh yes, *yes*,' interrupted Charles impatiently, for he hated hearing anything about Jocelyn's emotions. 'Of

course, of course. That was a quite foolish remark of mine.'

'Five 'undred pounds a year 'e got,' went on Sally, 'and me able to make sixpence go twice as far as most can. Dunno wot 'e's talkin' about.'

And indeed she didn't know, for she shared Mr. Pinner's opinion that five hundred a year was wealth.

'Fair beats me,' she added, after a thoughtful pause.

Well, thought Charles, the Moulsford family had behaved badly, and, under the cloak of sympathy and wishing to help, his and Laura's conduct had been most base; but they were certainly going to make up for it now. By God, yes. Crippenham, which he had at first thought of from sheer selfishness as the very place to get Sally to himself in, was evidently now the place of all others from which she could be helped. Quite close to Cambridge, within easy reach of young Luke, and in it, all-powerful even now in spite of his age, certainly all-powerful when it came to putting the fear of God into an undergraduate, or whatever he was, his ancient but still inflammable father. Naturally at ninety-three the old man consisted principally of embers; but these embers could still be fanned into a partial glow by the sight of a good horse or a beautiful woman, and Charles would only need to show Sally to him to have the old man on her side. Not able to hear, but able to see: what combination could, in the case of Sally, possibly be more admirable?

He drove on after lunch, his conscience clear; so clear that before leaving Thaxted he sent Laura a telegram telling her they were going to Crippenham, because he no longer wanted her to be made anxious,—for those only, thought Charles, are angry and wish to make others

uncomfortable who are themselves in the wrong. He was no longer in the wrong ; or, rather, he was no longer thinking with rapture of the wrong he would like to be in if Sally could be in it with him. Her speech made a gulf between them which his fastidious soul couldn't cross. There had to be h's before Charles could love with passion. Where there were none, passion with him collapsed and died. On this occasion it died at the inn at Thaxted towards the end of lunch ; and he was grateful, really, however unpleasant at the moment its dying was. For what mightn't have happened if she had gone on being silent and only saying yes and no, and smiling the divine, delicious smile that didn't only play in her dimples but laughed and danced in her darling eyes ? Charles was afraid that in that case he would have been done for. Talking, she had saved him ; and though he still loved her, for no man could look at Sally and not love her, he loved her differently,—kindly, gently, with a growingly motherly concern for her welfare. After Thaxted there was no further trace in his looks and manner of that which had made Sally suspect him of a wish to be a husband.

But she was surprised when he asked her, as they drove along, whether she would mind if he took her to his father in the country for the night, instead of back to what he called noisy London. Laura was in London ; why should she be taken somewhere else, away from her ? And to his father too—to more picks, fresh ones ; just as she was beginning to shake down nicely with the ones she knew. Surely the father of the picks would be the most frightening of all ?

So she said, ' Pardon ? ' and looked so much alarmed that Charles, smiling, explained that his father was

staying at that moment quite near Cambridge, and it would be convenient for the search for rooms she had told him Laura had promised to undertake with her next day.

'He's quite harmless,' Charles assured her, for she continued to look alarmed—if where she was to be taken to next was near Cambridge, it must also be near Woodles, and suppose her father were to happen to see her?—'and he's all alone there till Laura goes back to him tomorrow. It will cheer him up to have us. He's ninety-three.'

Ninety-three? 'Oh, my,' said Sally politely. ''E ain't 'alf old. Poor old gentleman,' she added with compassion, old people having been objects of special regard and attention in the Pinner circle.

But for the rest of the drive she was silent, for she was trying to thread her way among her indistinct and entangled thoughts, all of which seemed confusedly to press upon her notice that she oughtn't to be where she was at all, that if she was anywhere it ought to be with her husband, and that with every hour that passed she was sinking deeper and deeper in wrong-doing.

'Soon be in right up to the neck,' she said to herself with resigned unhappiness; and sincerely wished it were that time tomorrow, and she safely joined up with Mr. Luke, and finished for good and all with these soft-spoken but headstrong picks.

XIII

§

While they, along the roads, were drawing every minute nearer, the unconscious Duke was sitting in his plain study, having his plain tea, which had been set beside him by his plain parlourmaid. This is not to say that the parlourmaid was ill-favoured, but only that she wasn't a footman.

There were no footmen at Crippenham. There was hardly anything there, except the Duke. For years it had been his conviction that this annual fortnight of the rest that is obtained by complete contrast prolonged his life. Something evidently prolonged it, and the Duke was sure it was Crippenham. There he went every Easter alone with Laura, because it was a small house, and an ugly house, and a solitary house, and had nothing to recommend it except that it was the exact opposite of every other Moulsford possession.

Only Charles could come and go as he pleased; only he could dare break in without notice on the sacred yearly business of prolonging life. Although he had had ninety-three years of it, the Duke still wanted more. He liked being alive, and it pleased him to keep Streatley waiting. Streatley, and the other three children of his first marriage—absurd, he thought, to have to refer to those four old things as children—were unpopular with

their father. He had never at any time cared much for them, and had begun to be really angry with them when he was a lively seventy, and perceived that the possession of children bordering on a heavy fifty made him seem less young than he felt himself to be. Now that they were practically seventy themselves, and old seventies too, and he not looking a day different, he hoped, from what he had looked thirty years before, he was angrier with them than ever. He admitted that other people might be old at ninety-three, but he wasn't; he was the exception. He didn't feel old, and he didn't, he considered, look old, so what was all this talk of age? The press never mentioned him without the prefix venerable; people pretended he was deaf, when he could hear as well as any man if he wasn't mumbled at; Laura was continually making him sit out of draughts, just as if he were a damned invalid; arms were offered him if he wanted to walk a few steps—he couldn't appear in the House without some officious member of it, usually that ass Chepstow, who was eighty if a day himself, ambling across to help; and every time he had a birthday the newspapers tumbled over each other with their offensively astonished congratulations. Couldn't a man be over ninety without having it perpetually rubbed into him that he was old?

What he loved was his brood of young ones—Laura, Terry, and Charles; and of this lively trio the dearest to him was Charles. So that, looking up from his seed-cake and seeing his last born coming into the room, not only entirely unexpectedly but with a young woman, though he was surprised he wasn't angry; and when on their coming close to him he perceived the exceeding fairness of the young woman, his surprise became

pleasurable; very pleasurable; in fact, pleasurable to excess.

He stared up at Sally a moment, not listening to what Charles was saying, and then struggled to get on to his feet. Younger than his three young ones . . . much, much younger than his three young ones . . . youth, ah, youth . . . lovely, lovely youth. . . .

Charles wanted to help him, but was thrust aside. 'Poor old gentleman,' said Sally, catching him by the arm as he seemed about to lose his balance and drop back into the chair.

'Married?' asked the Duke, breathing hard after his exertion, and looking at Charles.

Charles shook his head.

''Course I'm married,' said Sally with heat.

'He means us,' said Charles.

'Us?' repeated Sally, much shocked.

'You're going to be, then,' said the Duke, looking first at her and then at Charles, his face red with pleasure.

Charles shook his head again, and laughed.

But the Duke didn't laugh. He stared at him a minute, and then said, 'Fool.'

'I *got* a nusband,' said Sally indignantly.

'He can't hear,' said Charles. 'He's very deaf.'

'What does she say?' asked the Duke. 'Speak clearly, my dear—no, don't shout,' he added; though Sally, far from going to shout, wasn't even opening her mouth. Poor old gentleman, she thought, gazing at him in silent compassion; fancy him still being anybody's father.

The Duke took her hand in a dry, cold grip.

'Like shakin' 'ands with a tombstone,' thought Sally.

And she was filled with so great a pity for anything so old that she didn't feel shy of him at all, and in the coaxing voice of one who is addressing a baby she said, ' 'Ave yer tea while it's 'ot—do, now.'

Charles looked at her astonished. Nearly everybody was afraid of his father. She reminded him of the weaned child in Isaiah, who put its hand fearlessly on the cockatrice's den.

' What does she say ? ' asked the Duke, gazing at her with delight.

' This is Mrs. Luke, Father—a friend of Laura's,' shouted Charles, ' and I've brought her——'

' Write it down, my dear,' said the Duke, not heeding Charles, and drawing Sally into a chair next his own and pushing paper and a pencil towards her with his shaking old hands. ' Write down what you were saying to me.'

Charles became anxious. He felt sure Sally couldn't write anything down. Nor could she ; for if her spoken words were imperfect her written ones were worse, so that to be given a pencil and paper by the Duke and told to write might have been embarrassing if she hadn't, owing to his extreme age and evident dilapidation, felt he wasn't, as she said to herself, all there. Poor old gentleman, she thought, full of pity. What she saw, sitting heavily in the chair, breathing hard and blinking at her so kindly, was just, thought Sally, the remains, the left-overs ; like, she said to herself, her images being necessarily domestic, Sunday's dinner by the time one got to Friday,—not much good, that is, but had to be put up with. No ; there was nothing frightening about *him*, poor old gentleman. More like a baby than anything else.

' 'Ave yer tea while it's 'ot,' she said again, gently

putting the paper and pencil aside. 'Do you good,' she encouraged, 'a nice 'ot cup of tea will.'

'He can't hear, you know,' said Charles, much relieved by Sally's attitude. But with what confidence, he thought, couldn't a thing so gracious approach the most churlish, disgruntled of human beings; and his father wasn't either churlish or disgruntled,—he only looked as if he were, and frightened people, and when he saw they were frightened he didn't like them, and frightened them more than ever.

The Duke, watching Sally's every movement with rapt attention, thought when she put her hand on the teapot to feel if it was still hot that she wanted tea herself, and bade Charles ring the bell and order more to be brought, and meanwhile he took the cup she offered him obediently, his eyes on her face. He hadn't got as far, being still in too great a condition of amazement at her beauty, as wondering which of the ancient families of England had produced this young shoot of perfection, and not being able to hear a word she said took it for granted that the delicate-ankled—he was of the practically extinct generation that looks first at a woman's ankles,—slender-fingered creature belonged to his own kind. True her hands were red hands; surprisingly red, he thought, on her presently taking off her gloves, which she rolled up together into a neat tight ball, compared to the flawless fairness of her face; but they were the authentic shape of good-breeding, even if her nails——

The Duke was really surprised when his eyes reached Sally's nails.

Charles drew a chair close up to his father, and began his explanations. He was determined the old man

should attend, and shouted well into his ear as he told him that he had motored Laura's friend, Mrs. Luke, down from London, where she had been staying with Laura at Goring House, to Crippenham for the night because it was quieter, and she hadn't been well——

'*I'm* all right,' interrupted Sally, who had been listening in an attitude of polite attention.

'Oh, my dear child—when you fainted,' protested Charles in his ordinary voice, raising a deprecating hand.

'Speak up,' said the Duke, impatiently.

''Course I fainted,' said Sally, looking pleased.

'What does she say?' asked the Duke.

'Yes—and were unconscious for at least half an hour,' said Charles.

'That's right. *And* sick,' said Sally, looking proud.

'Sick? Were you sick as well? Then see how really ill——'

'Speak up, speak up,' said the Duke testily.

But Sally said nothing further, and merely smiled indulgently at Charles.

'What did she say?' asked the Duke, not wishing to lose a word that fell from that enchanting mouth.

'She said,' shouted Charles, 'that she is quite well now.'

'Of course she is,' said the Duke, staring at her face and forgetting her nails. 'Anyone can see she is as perfectly well as she is perfectly beautiful.'

'Oh lor,' thought Sally, 'now *'e's* goin' to begin.'

§

That afternoon and evening were a triumph for her if she had known it, but all she knew was that she was counting the hours to next day, and Jocelyn, and the

settling down at last to her home and her duties. The old man was her slave. Crippenham and everything in it was laid at her feet, and the Duke only lamented that it should be to this one of his houses that she had come, where he couldn't, he was afraid, make her even decently comfortable. Positively at Crippenham there was only one bathroom. The Duke seemed to regard this as a calamity, and Sally listened with mild wonder to the amount he had to say about it.

'Fair 'arps on it, don't 'e, poor old gentleman,' she remarked to Charles; and bending over to the Duke's ear—Charles looked on in astonishment at the fearless familiarity of the gesture—she tried to convey to him that it wasn't Saturday night till the next night, and that by then she'd be in Cambridge, so there was no need for him to take on.

'Eh?' said the Duke. 'What does she say?' he asked Charles.

'She says,' shouted Charles, 'that it doesn't matter.'

How very glad he was that his father was so deaf. Often he had found his deafness trying, but how glad he was of it now. Not Saturday night. . . . Charles fell silent. It was then Friday. Could it be that since the previous Saturday—— ?

The Duke, however, knew nothing of Sally except what his eyes told him, and accordingly he was her slave. When she presently went up to Laura's room with the housekeeper, who had instructions to place everything of Lady Laura's at Mrs. Luke's disposal—Crippenham had no spare rooms, only a room each for the Duke, and Charles, and Laura, the other six or seven bedrooms being left unfurnished and kept locked up—and Charles, who from long practice could make his father hear better

than anyone except Laura, settled down to telling him as much about Sally as he thought prudent, the old man listened eagerly, his hand behind his ear, drinking in every word and asking questions which showed that if he was really interested in a subject he still could be most shrewd.

He was delighted that Sally should have run away from her mother-in-law, said it was proof of a fine, thoroughbred spirit, and asked who her father was.

Charles said his name was Pinner.

The Duke then inquired whether he were one of the Worcestershire Pinners, and Charles said he didn't know.

The Duke then rambled off among his capacious memories, and presently brought back a Pinner who had been at Christchurch with him, and who had married, he said, one of the Dartmoors, an extremely handsome woman, fair too, who was probably the girl's grandmother.

Charles merely bowed his head.

The Duke then asked who the Lukes, apart from this boy-husband at Ananias, were; for, he said, except the fellow in the Bible, he couldn't recollect ever having heard of a Luke before.

Charles said all he knew was that they lived at South Winch.

'What?' cried the Duke. 'Has she married beneath her?'—and was so really upset that for a time he blinked at Charles in silence. Because he felt that if only this dear son of his had secured the beautiful young creature he could have died content; and it seemed to him a double catastrophe that not only should his boy have missed her, but that she should have been caught into a misalliance with some obscure family in a suburb.

'Upon my word, Charles,' he said, after a dismayed silence, 'that's a pity. A very great pity.'

And rambling off into his memories again, he said it was a good thing that poor Jack Pinner was dead, for no man had a keener family feeling than he, and it would have broken his heart to think his grand-daughter had made a mistake of that kind.

He couldn't get over it. He had never, in the whole of his long life, seen anyone to touch this girl for beauty, and that she should, at the very outset of what ought to have been a career of unparalleled splendour and success, have dropped out of her proper sphere and become entangled in a suburb really shocked him. Kings at her feet, all Europe echoing with her name—this seemed to the Duke such beauty's proper accompaniment.

'Tut, tut,' he said, his hands, clasped on the top of his stick, shaking more than usual, 'tut, tut, tut. What was her mother thinking of?'

'Her mother is dead,' said Charles.

'Her father, then. Jack Pinner was no fool. I don't understand how his son—where is he, by the way? I heard something about the Worcestershire estates having been sold after the war——'

Charles said he didn't know where her father was, because, although Sally had told him the shop was at Woodles, he had never heard of Woodles, which indeed is not marked on any map, so that he felt he wasn't lying in saying he didn't know.

The Duke, however, appeared to be seized by a sudden fierce desire to track down his old friend's reprehensible son and tell him what he thought of him, and Charles was dismayed, for no good, he was sure, could come of tracking down Mr. Pinner. Sally, he knew, was anxious

her father shouldn't find out her disobedience to his orders, and though of this disobedience Charles held Laura guilty, not Sally, yet he didn't suppose Mr. Pinner would look at it like that, and it was, besides, important, Charles considered, that his father, who had always had a rooted objection to any woman who wasn't well-bred, should go on thinking Sally was a Worcestershire Pinner.

It seemed, then, to Charles a good thing to keep his father and Mr. Pinner apart, and it was therefore with regret that he listened to the old man asking Sally the moment he next saw her, which wasn't till dinner, for she stayed up in her room till fetched down by the scandalised housekeeper, to whom it was a new experience that His Grace should be kept waiting even a minute after the gong had sounded, where her father was.

'Im?' said Sally, turning pale but forced by nature and her upbringing to an obedient truthfulness. 'E's at Woodles, *'e* is.' And, 'Oh my gracious,' she added to herself, 'they ain't goin' to tell 'im I'm 'ere?'

'What does she say?' the Duke asked Charles.

'She says,' shouted Charles, following his father, who was shuffling along leaning on Sally's arm, to the dining-room, and shouting with outward composure but inward regret, 'that he is at Woodles.'

'Woodles? Woodles?' repeated the Duke. 'Never heard of it. Is it in Worcestershire?'

Sally shook her head. She didn't know where Worcestershire was, but she felt pretty sure Woodles wasn't in it.

'*I* dunno wot it's in,' she said. And then, impelled as always to the naked truth, she added, 'Close by 'ere, any'ow.'

'What does she say?' inquired the Duke, turning again to Charles.

'She says,' shouted Charles, obliged to hand on the answer correctly with Sally listening, but doing so with increased regret, 'that it isn't far from here.'

'How very lucky,' said the Duke, 'and how very odd that I shouldn't have known he was so near.' And he added, when he had been lowered into his chair at the head of the table by the parlourmaid, who held one arm, and his servant, who held the other, 'I'd like to have a talk with that father of yours, my dear.'

Sally turned paler.

'Your grandfather was one of my oldest friends,' continued the Duke, with difficulty unfolding his table-napkin because of how much his hands shook.

'I ain't *got* no grandfather,' said Sally anxiously, who had never heard of him till that moment.

'What does she say?' asked the Duke.

'She says,' began Charles reluctantly—'You know,' he muttered quickly to Sally, for how could he tell the old man what she had said? 'you *have* a grandfather—or had. You must have. Everybody has them.'

'What? What?' said the Duke impatiently. 'Send a message round tonight, Charles, and say with my compliments that I'd very much like to see Pinner. Tell him I'm too old to go to him, so perhaps he'll be obliging enough to come to me some time tomorrow. You can say his father was at Oxford with me if you like, and that I've only just heard he is in the neighbourhood. Say his daughter——'

'Now don't—now *don't* go doin' a thing like that,' Sally faintly begged of Charles.

'What does she say?' asked the Duke.

'Do you think it's wise to break your rule of never seeing anybody while you're here?' shouted Charles. 'You shouldn't,' he added to Sally, 'have told him about Woodles.'

'But 'e *ask* me,' said Sally, distressed.

'You're not obliged to tell everybody everything,' said Charles.

'But if they *asks* me——' said Sally, almost in tears.

The Duke became suddenly cross. 'I hate all this muttering,' he said. 'Why on earth can't you speak up, Charles?'

Charles spoke up. 'It's impossible to send tonight, Father,' he shouted. 'If you won't keep servants here you can't send messages.'

'Then you can go yourself tomorrow,' said the Duke.

'Now don't—now *don't* go doin' a thing like that,' implored Sally again.

'And bring him back in your car,' said the Duke.

'I believe Mrs. Luke would rather not see her father,' shouted Charles.

'That's right,' said Sally, nodding her head emphatically. It did sound awful though—not wanting to see one's father. 'Ain't I gettin' wicked *quick*,' she thought; and hung her head.

He didn't seem to think so, however, the old gentleman didn't, for he leant across to her looking as pleasant as pleasant, and patted her shoulder with his poor shaky old hand, and said she was quite right. Right? Poor old gentleman, thought Sally—past even knowing good from bad.

The Duke bent across and patted her shoulder, a broad smile on his face. Such spirit—running away from her mother-in-law, and kicking at seeing her father

—delighted him. She was a high-stepper, this lovely, noble little lady, and all his life he had admired only those women whose steps were high.

'You shan't see him, my dear,' he said. 'Quite right, quite right not to wish to.' And just as she was heaving a sigh of thankfulness he added, 'But *I* will. I really must have a talk with him.'

Strange, thought Charles, this determination to talk with Sally's father. How much better, how much more really useful, to talk with her husband, or her mother-in-law.

§

After dinner, which Sally ate reluctantly, for she well knew by now that her ways with knives and forks were somehow different from the ways of people like Lukes and dukes, and she felt, besides, that the old gentleman's eye was on her—which it was, but her face, for she was of course now without her hat, engrossed his whole attention, and he saw nothing that her hands were doing—after dinner, after, that is, the small cups of clear soup and the grilled cutlets with floury potatoes which were the evening meal at Crippenham during the severity of the retreat, Charles went into the garden to smoke.

It was a small garden, with nothing in it but a plot of rough grass, some shrubs, a tree or two, and in one corner the shut up four-roomed cottage his father had had built for him and Laura and Terry twenty-five years ago, when first he bought Crippenham, to play at housekeeping in. For years it had been unused; a melancholy object, Charles thought whenever he went into the garden and saw it there, smothered in creepers and

deserted, a relic of vanished youth, a reminder that one was getting old.

Beneath its silent walls he wandered up and down, thinking. Every now and then, drawn by the light streaming out through the uncurtained window of his father's study, he crossed the grass and stood a moment looking in, fascinated by the picture inside,—the two figures brilliantly lit up, the hunched-up old man, with his great bald head glistening in the light, talking, talking, and the exquisite girl, her head bowed in a divine courtesy and patience, listening, though her angelic little face was distinctly troubled. That was because of the fear of her father, Charles knew. She needn't be afraid. If the old man insisted on seeing Pinner he would have to go to Woodles himself, for Charles certainly wasn't going to fetch the creature. Charles didn't at all like Mr. Pinner—imagine turning down a daughter, and such a daughter, when she fled to him for sanctuary !—but though he didn't like him, and quite shared his father's opinion that he should be talked to, wisdom told him that the best thing to do with Mr. Pinner was to leave him alone. The Lukes were the ones needing talking to. The Lukes were the people to deal with. The Lukes——

Yes ; what line had he best take with his father in the conversation he meant to have after their adorable guest had gone to bed ? He wandered up and down the path beneath the shuttered windows of the deserted cottage, deep in reflection. It was clear to him that nobody except his father could really help Sally. Laura, though she was provided with everything, and more than everything, that she wanted, had no separate income of her own, and could do nothing beyond giving

moral support. He himself couldn't lift a finger without at once causing scandal. His father could; his father was the only person who could; and his father, Charles determined, should. There were, then, after all, thought Charles, back at the window again and staring through it, compensations in being so old: one could help Sally. His father was revoltingly rich. It would be nothing to him to set her on her feet. True, there was no earthly reason why he should, but sometimes—great God, couldn't a man sometimes come out of the narrow ring of reason, get outside the circle of just claims, forget his cautious charities, be unbusinesslike, break traditions, shock solicitors, and for once in his life do something absurd, and beautiful, and entirely for nothing?

Charles threw away his cigarette, and with his hands in his pockets took a few quick strides about the little garden, excited, stirred out of his customary calm. Why, even if the old man did as little for her as interrupt his rest-cure for a few hours and take her into Cambridge himself, just for the girl to be seen with him, just for her to appear under his wing, would knock every obstacle out of her path, except that one obstacle of young Luke's poverty. His father knew the Master of Ananias; his father knew everybody. They all listened when he spoke. The merest indication of a wish would be attended to. It was, of course, regrettable that there should be this attentiveness to a man merely because he was rich and a duke, but by God, thought Charles, how damned convenient.

He walked quickly about the little garden. His father must be made to understand the situation. He would sit up all night if necessary, getting it into his head. He would tell him everything Sally had told

him, adding anything that should seem in his judgment effective, and only keeping Mr. Pinner back, and the fact that the darling, lovely girl was not at her best in conversation and no good at all at writing things down. His father must take the Lukes by the hand; he must be led to desire to do so above all things. Tact, skill, judgment,—Charles would sit up all night exercising these. Mrs. Luke must be suppressed. The unpleasant youth, who dared be angry, must be taught his incredible good fortune in getting such a wife. Those Lukes——

Suddenly Charles stood still.

Those Lukes . . .

Queer, but the words had sounded in his ears like a cry of pain.

He was down at the edge of the garden, which ended in a ditch, and on the other side stretched flat, empty fields divided from each other by hedges and rows of elms, darker than the darkness. The air smelt of damp grass. The sky was wonderful, thick strewn with stars. A great peace lay over the fields. They seemed folded in silence. He could hear nothing but the croak of a far away frog. Why, then, had it seemed to him as if——

Charles stood motionless.

Those Lukes . . . what must they not, since yesterday, have suffered?

Extraordinary, that he hadn't thought of it before.

XIV

§

SPEAKING of this time later on, Mrs. Luke was accustomed to say, 'It was a *mauvais quart d'heure*,' and to smile; but in her heart, when she thought of it, there was no smile.

She never forgot that coming down to breakfast on the morning of Sally's flight, so unconscious of anything having happened, pleased that it was a fine day for her party, pleased with the pretty frock she had had sent from Harrods for the child to wear, excited at the prospect of presenting her to a dazzled South Winch, confident, somehow, with that curiously cloudless confidence that seems to lay hold of those about to be smitten by fate, that her beautiful daughter-in-law would behave perfectly, and the whole thing be a great success. Fate was about to smite her; and with more than the disappearance of a daughter-in-law, for that disappearance was but the first step to having to give up, renounce entirely and for always, her son.

Jocelyn came down to breakfast in a good humour too. He had slept like a log, after his series of interrupted nights.

'Sally's late,' he said presently.

'She is, isn't she,' said his mother. 'You won't call her Sally this afternoon, will you, dearest,' she added, giving him his coffee.

'Sorry, Mother. No. I'll remember.'

And soon after that they made their discovery.

'Now what,' Mrs. Luke asked herself, pressing her cold hands together, when an hour or two later it became evident beyond doubt that Sally hadn't merely gone, unaccountably, for an early walk, but had gone altogether, 'now what, what have I done to deserve this?'

And the period of torment began, the period of distress and anxiety, of anger at first which soon flickered out, and of ever-growing, sickening fear, which she afterwards spoke of quietly as a *mauvais quart d'heure.*

It took some time before she and Jocelyn could be convinced that this wasn't just a before breakfast walk. They clung to the hope that it was, in spite of their knowledge of Sally's lack of initiative. Yet how much more initiative would be needed, they thought, looking at each other with frightened eyes, to do that which it became every moment more and more apparent that she had done.

'But why? But why?' Mrs. Luke kept on asking, pressing her cold hands together.

Jocelyn said nothing.

At eleven o'clock, when it was plain she wasn't coming back, he went out and fetched his car.

'She's gone to her father,' he said.

'But why? Oh, Jocelyn—why?'

'We've made her unhappy,' he said, pulling on his gloves, his face set.

'Unhappy?'

'*I* have, anyway. I've been an infernal cad—I tell you I *have*,' he said, turning on his mother. 'It's no good your telling me I haven't—I *have*.'

And he drove off, leaving her at the gate pressing her

cold hands together, and staring after him with wide-open eyes.

But his coming back was worse than his going. It was after six before he got home, tired and dusty, at the fag end of the terrible party.

Mrs. Luke hadn't seen how not to have the party, and had told her friends—ah, how much she shrank from them—when they trooped in punctually at half-past four, eager to see Jocelyn's bride, that her daughter-in-law very unfortunately had had to go that morning to her father, who had suddenly fallen ill.

'An old man,' said poor Mrs. Luke—after dreary and painful thought she had come to the conclusion that if she said it was Sally who had fallen ill, Hammond would be sure sooner or later to give her away,—'an old man, I'm afraid, and liable to—liable to——'

What was he liable to? Mrs. Luke's brain wouldn't work. Her lips, forced into the continual smile of the hostess, trembled. She wanted to cry. How badly, how badly she wanted just to sit down in a corner alone, and cry.

Then Jocelyn came back. There were still the Walkers there, and Miss Cartwright, and old Mrs. Pugh. Why wouldn't they go? Why did they hang on, and hang on, and never, never go?

They all heard the car. They all knew it was his, because it made so much more noise than anybody else's, and they all knew, because Mrs. Luke had told them, that he had motored his wife himself that morning to her sick father.

'Ah. *Now* we shall have the bulletin,' said the Canon cheerfully; for the illness, probably slight, of an unknown young lady's almost certainly inglorious father

couldn't be regarded, he felt, as an occasion for serious gloom. 'No doubt it is a good one, and Jocelyn has been able to bring his wife back with him.'

'I'll go and see,' said Mrs. Luke, getting up quickly, and almost running out of the room.

'What a lot of trouble there is in the world, to be sure,' said old Mrs. Pugh, shaking her head, 'what a lot of trouble.'

'Do you mean the father?' asked Mrs. Walker.

'Who *is* the father?' asked Miss Cartwright.

'Nobody knows,' said the Canon.

'Not really?' said Miss Cartwright.

'Hush——' said the Canon, raising his hand.

Outside the window, which was open, Jocelyn was speaking, and holding their breaths they heard him say, 'Well, Mother? What time did she get back?'

§

He had been to Mr. Pinner. He had heard what Mr. Pinner had to say. The man had behaved well, had done his duty and sent her straight home; but she hadn't got there.

Fear now descended on Jocelyn's and his mother's souls,—fear ten times greater than the fear of the morning; such fear that they were hardly aware of the Walkers, and Miss Cartwright, and old Mrs. Pugh, and said good-bye to them mechanically, and hadn't an idea what any of them were saying, and the dusk deepened, and night came, and it grew late, and they sat listening and watching at the window, the window wide open so as to catch the first sounds of a footstep on the path, and they sat in almost complete silence, for they were too much frightened to speak.

That child—somewhere out there in the darkness—that beautiful, ignorant child, by herself in London—Sally, who had only to appear to collect a crowd—Sally, so trustful, so ready to obey anybody. . . .

But what did one *do*? Who did one go to? What *could* one do but still, in the dark, not speaking, hardly breathing so intently were they listening, wait?

Fragments of what Mr. Pinner had said drifted in and out of Jocelyn's brain——

'Told 'er to take a taxi all the way . . .'

'Give 'er a pound, I did . . .'

'Mistake was, lettin' that there car go . . .'

That car? What car?

'Mother,' he said suddenly, 'what car?'

'What car, my darling?'

'She arrived there in a car. Her father said so. I forgot to tell you.'

'A car?'

Mrs. Luke got up quickly. So did he. She turned on the light, and it shone on their pale faces staring at each other. He hadn't remembered the car till that moment.

Then without a word she went into the passage, snatched up a coat, wrapped it round herself, and before he could speak was out of the house. 'Wait there,' she called over her shoulder, 'wait there—she might come——'

A car. Whose car but Edgar's? Had Edgar——? Was Edgar——?

No, no. Impossible. She had arrived alone at her father's, and the car had left her there.

But Edgar must know—he could tell her. . . .

§

The butler hadn't wanted to let her in, seeing her looking so wild on the steps when he answered the ring, and no hat on, and an old coat pulled round her shoulders, and he well knowing the affair with his master was off; but what did she care for butlers? She simply pushed past him, and went straight to the library—the handsome, Turkey-carpeted, leathery library she so vividly remembered—and there, as she expected, sat Mr. Thorpe.

He was in a deep chair before a great wood fire, with beside him, on a little Moorish table, his coffee and his liqueur, in his hands the evening paper, and in his mouth a huge cigar. He didn't look in the least unhappy, nor did he look in the least as if he were still angry. On the contrary, he looked contented and pleased. But this expression changed when, turning his head on hearing the door open, he saw Mrs. Luke.

'Edgar,' she said, coming quickly across to him, holding Jocelyn's coat together at her neck with shaking fingers, 'where is Salvatia?'

And it was no use his staring at her as if she were a ghost, which indeed at first he thought she must be, so totally unlike the nicely dressed, ladylike Margery of his misplaced love was this white-faced, ruffled-haired woman,—it was no use his staring at her openmouthed and not answering, and then getting up with deliberation and ostentatiously going towards the bell, for she took no notice of any of that, and went on to say that Salvatia wasn't with her father, who had sent her back to South Winch at once that morning, and hadn't come home. Did he know where she was?

Then Mr. Thorpe, in his turn, was frightened. Not with her father ? Not come home ?

He stared at Mrs. Luke. What had he done ? What, if that were the case, had he done ? And instead of the agreeable vision he had been so much pleased with of paying out Margery and her stuck-up son, and the still more agreeable vision of visiting Sally secretly and comfortably at her father's, and developing his friendship with her to almost any extent, he saw, as he stood staring, a picture that really frightened him, a picture of young beauty lost somehow in London, and quite peculiarly defenceless.

What had he done ?

But Mr. Thorpe was a man of action. Not his to wring his hands and wait and hope ; not his to waste time, either, confessing that he had behaved abominably, and begging Margery's pardon. He did both, but quickly, economising words, and within five minutes was round at Almond Tree Cottage, and within ten minutes his car was round there, and within an hour he and Jocelyn were at Scotland Yard—Jocelyn, who also had no time for anger with Mr. Thorpe, who had no time for anything but searching for and rescuing Sally.

Nor did Mr. Thorpe say much to Jocelyn. His longest speech was to remark, looking out of the window on his side of the car as they tore up to London, that it was a pity one couldn't get out of the habit of behaving first and thinking afterwards. He could go no nearer than this to apologising. He had done Jocelyn a great wrong, he knew, but he couldn't bring himself to say so. To the mother, yes ; somehow it was easier to eat humble pie to a woman. Contrition welled up in Mr. Thorpe, but stuck in his throat. It wouldn't come out.

'Damned pity, eh?' he repeated, though not as one who requires an answer.

'It's so beastly *dark*,' was all Jocelyn said, huddled, whitefaced and sick, in the other corner.

§

Scotland Yard took down particulars.

'Expense no object,' said Mr. Thorpe.

'I can't pay,' said Jocelyn, who was shivering.

'But I can,' said Mr. Thorpe. 'What you've got to do,' he continued to the official, 'is to find her instantly—*instantly*, do you hear? Get a move on. Not a minute to lose. If you'd seen her you'd understand—eh?' he said, turning to Jocelyn for confirmation, who only shivered.

This great place—all the policemen they had met—all the being passed on from one official to another—nothing but officials, officials everywhere—it struck his heart cold. Sally in connection with this? He couldn't speak. His lips were dry. He felt sick.

'Upset,' said Mr. Thorpe confidentially to the official. 'Husband. Bound to be.'

The official nodded, and began telephoning.

'I'll let you know,' he said to Mr. Thorpe, the receiver at his ear. 'It's no use your waiting here. Where can I—that you, Williams? Just one moment—where can I ring you up?'

And he wrote down the name of the hotel Mr. Thorpe gave him, for Mr. Thorpe wasn't going to leave London till he had found Sally, not if he had to stay in it ten years, and then bowed his head in abstracted dismissal, his eyes gone absent-minded while he rapidly conversed with the person at the other end of the telephone.

'Come on,' said Mr. Thorpe, laying hold of Jocelyn's arm.

He took him away to the hotel. The hotel was the Carlton. 'Know me at the Carlton,' said Mr. Thorpe, who in the first year of his widowerhood, before he felt justified in beginning to court Mrs. Luke, had sometimes consoled himself with the cooking of the Carlton. And thus it was that Mrs. Luke presently found herself too at the Carlton, for Jocelyn, who no more than Mr. Thorpe would leave the neighbourhood of Scotland Yard, was concerned for his mother, left alone at Almond Tree Cottage. So Mr. Thorpe sent the car back for her, and also for the necessary luggage. He couldn't quite see himself appearing next morning at the Carlton in the dinner-jacket he put on every night at Abergeldie because of the butler.

§

She arrived at one in the morning. Mr. Thorpe by that time had taken three bedrooms, and a sitting-room.

'I can't pay,' said the unhappy Jocelyn on seeing these arrangements.

'But I can,' said Mr. Thorpe.

'I don't know why——' began Jocelyn, shrinking under the accumulating weight of obligations.

'But *I* do,' said Mr. Thorpe, cutting him short.

Mrs. Luke never forgot that pink sitting-room at the Carlton, for it was there that Jocelyn, walking up and down it practically demented, cast himself adrift from her for ever. And yet what had she done but try to help him? What had she ever done all his life but love him, and try to help him?

'There's been too much of that—there's been too

much of that,' Jocelyn raved, when she attempted, faintly, for she was exhausted, to defend herself.

She soon gave up. She soon said nothing more at all, but sat crying softly, the tears dropping unnoticed on her folded hands.

Before this, however, while the car was fetching her from South Winch, Mr. Thorpe, bracing himself to his plain and unshirkable duty, invited Jocelyn into the sitting-room he had engaged, and ordered whiskies and sodas. These he drank by himself, while Jocelyn, his head sunk on his chest, sat stretched full length in a low chair staring at nothing ; and having drunk the whiskies, Mr. Thorpe felt able to perform his duty.

Which he did ; and in a series of brief sentences described the girl's state of mind when he accidentally found her down by his fence, and how it was the idea of being left alone with Jocelyn's mother till the summer that she couldn't stand, because she simply couldn't stand his mother. Frightened of her. Scared stiff. Just simply couldn't stand her.

At this Jocelyn, roused from his stupor, looked round at Mr. Thorpe with heavy-eyed amazement.

' Couldn't stand my mother ? ' he said in tones of wonder, his mouth remaining open, so much was he surprised.

' That's the ticket,' said Mr. Thorpe ; and drank more whiskey.

He then, after explaining that he wasn't an orator, told Jocelyn in a further series of brief sentences that it was unnatural for wives to live with their mothers-in-law instead of with their husbands, that his wife knew and felt this, and that she was, besides, having been brought up on the Bible and being otherwise ignorant of

life, genuinely and deeply shocked at what she regarded as his disobedience to God's laws.

'But my mother,' said Jocelyn, 'has been nothing but——'

'Sees red about your mother, that girl does,' interrupted Mr. Thorpe.

'But *why*?' said Jocelyn, sitting up straight now, his brows knitted in the most painful bewilderment.

'Don't ask *me*,' said Mr. Thorpe; and drank more whiskey.

He then told Jocelyn, in a third and last series of brief sentences, for after that not only had he said his say but the young man didn't seem able to stand any more, that if—no, when—his wife was restored to him, he had better see to it that his mother was as far off and as permanently off as possible; and then, Jocelyn by this time looking the very image of wretchedness, he gave him, poor young devil, the bit of comfort of telling him that his wife had only meant to leave him till she knew he was in Cambridge, and that then she had been going to join him there, and live in some rooms somewhere near him. It wasn't him she was running from, it was his mother.

'All that girl asked,' said Mr. Thorpe, bringing his fist, weighty now with whiskey, down shatteringly on the table, 'was a couple of rooms, and you sometimes in them. A girl in a thousand. If she'd been as ugly as sin she'd still have been a treasure to any man. But look at her—*look* at her, I say.'

'Oh, damn you!' shouted Jocelyn, springing to his feet, unable to bear any more, 'Damn you—damn you! How dare you, how dare you, when it's you—*you*——'

And he came towards Mr. Thorpe, his arms lifted as

if to strike him; but he suddenly dropped them to his sides, and turning away gripped hold of the chimney-piece, and, laying his head on his hands, sobbed.

§

Charles Moulsford, then, was right, and the Lukes suffered. So did Mr. Thorpe, for it was all his fault really. He was amazed at the ease and swiftness with which he had slipped away from being evidently and positively a decent man into being equally evidently and positively an evil-doer. That he had done evil, and perhaps irreparable evil, was plain. Yet its beginning was after all quite small. He had only helped the girl to go to her father. Such an act hadn't deserved this tremendous punishment. Mr. Thorpe couldn't help feeling that fate was behaving unfairly by him. If all his impulses and indiscretions throughout his life had been punished like this, where would he have been by now?

But that was neither here nor there. This terrible thing had happened, and it was his fault. Without him she couldn't have budged; and, weighed down by his direct responsibility, when Jocelyn advanced on him with his fists uplifted ready to strike him he rather hoped he would actually do it, and when instead the poor devil broke down and began to cry, Mr. Thorpe was very unhappy indeed. Perhaps he hadn't been quite tactful in the things he had said to him. Perhaps he had been clumsy. Whiskey was tricky stuff. He had only meant——

Then Margery arrived, with her white face and great, scared eyes, and found her son standing there holding on to the chimneypiece and crying, and—well, Mr.

Thorpe felt he had overdone the getting even business altogether, and discovered with a shock that he could no longer regard himself as a decent man.

He went away to his bedroom, leaving them alone. He didn't know what they were saying to each other, but he could hear that Jocelyn seemed to be talking a good deal. Couldn't stop, the poor devil couldn't; went on and on.

Mr. Thorpe sat down to think out plans, the ceaseless sound of that voice in his ears. It was he who had lost the girl, and it was he who was going to find her. If Scotland Yard found her first so much the better, but he wasn't going to sit still till they did, he was going off on his own account next morning. He'd begin by sending Margery home, who was doing no good here, he could tell by the sounds coming through the door, pack Jocelyn, who was doing no good here either raving like that, off to Cambridge because of the remote chance that the girl was going to be able after all to do what she said and join him there, and he himself would meanwhile make a bee-line for her father.

Pinner was the man. Pinner was the point to start from. Pinner and Woodles. She had said his name was Pinner, and that he lived at Woodles. Woodles? Funny sort of name that, thought Mr. Thorpe, trying to cheer himself up by being amused at it. The sounds coming through the door weren't very cheering. Raving, the poor young devil was,—raving at his mother. Mr. Thorpe feared he had perhaps been quite beastly tactless, telling him of Sally's not being able to stand his mother. He felt very uncomfortable about it, sitting there with those sounds in his ears. And meanwhile the night was slipping along, and where was that girl?

There were so many possible answers to this question, and all of them so very unpleasant, that Mr. Thorpe couldn't, he found, sit quiet in his chair. Three o'clock. Fourteen hours now since last she was seen . . .

He got up and walked about. In the next room he could hear Jocelyn doing the same thing. No—dash it all, thought Mr. Thorpe after listening for some time to the ceaseless voice, he couldn't be allowed to go on at his mother like that. He'd had close on a couple of hours of it. All very well being heartbroken, all very well being out of one's senses, but he couldn't be allowed——

Mr. Thorpe opened the door and went in. There was Jocelyn, striding about the room, up and down, round and round, enough to make one giddy just to see him, his words pouring out, his face convulsed, and there sitting looking at him, not saying a word, with tears rolling down her face, was his mother.

No—damn it all—there were limits——

'Better shut up now, eh?' said Mr. Thorpe firmly to the demented young man. 'Said all there's to say long ago, I bet. Won't help, you know—this sort of thing.'

'I'm telling my mother—I'm making it clear to her once and for all,' raved Jocelyn, who indeed no longer had the least control of himself, 'that if I ever find Sally never again as long as I *live* shall she come between us, never shall she set *foot*——'

'Oh, shut up. We know all that, don't we, Margery. Who's going to come between you, you silly young ass? Look here—no good crying, you know,' said Mr. Thorpe, going to Mrs. Luke and putting his arm round her. It seemed natural. For two pins he would have kissed her. Habit. Can't get away from habits.

But Mrs. Luke didn't appear to know he was there.

Her eyes, from which the tears dropped slowly and unnoticed, were fixed only on Jocelyn.

'He's so tired—so tired,' she kept on whispering to herself. 'Oh, my darling—you're so *tired*.'

§

It was Mr. Pinner's turn next day to have a bad time, and he had it. He had a most miserable day, from noon on, when the same car that had brought Sally drew up in front of his shop, and a stout elderly gentleman with a red face and a bristly moustache got out, and came and spent half an hour with him.

What a half hour that was; but all of a piece with the life he seemed now to be living. The day before there had been first Sally, and then Mr. Luke, and now there was this gentleman. Mr. Luke had soon been pacified, and only wanted to be getting home again, but the stout gentleman came in and sat down square to it, and at the end of half an hour Mr. Pinner felt as if he had been turned inside out, and wouldn't ever be able to look himself in the face again.

For Sally hadn't gone home, and it was his fault that she hadn't. These were the facts; the gentleman said so. Terrible, terrible, thought Mr. Pinner, shrinking further than ever into his trousers. The first fact was terrible enough, but the second seemed even worse to Mr. Pinner. Responsibility, again—and he who had supposed when he got Sally safely married that he had done with it for good and all!

At first he had tried to make a stand and hold up his head, and had said politely—nothing lost by manners, —'Excuse me, sir, but are you by any chance the gentleman my daughter mentioned to me as 'er father-

in-law ? ' And when the gentleman, after a minute, said he was, Mr. Pinner told him that in that case it was he who was responsible for her loss, for it was he who had lent her the car in which she had left her husband.

Wasn't this true ? Anybody would have thought so ; but before Mr. Pinner could say knife the boot had been put on the other leg, and he found that it was his fault and his only that she was lost, because he hadn't, as the gentleman said was his plain duty, taken her back himself to the very door.

Mr. Pinner, constitutionally unable not to feel guilty if anybody told him loud enough that he was, at once saw the truth of this. Terrible. Awful. Fancy. Yes, indeed—a daughter like that. Yes, indeed—*any* daughter, but a daughter like that, a daughter in a million. No, indeed—he didn't know how he came not to do such a thing——

And the more Mr. Thorpe cross-examined him about the details of that seeing-off at the station, the more did Mr. Pinner's conduct appear criminal ; for, under Mr. Thorpe's searching questions, Mr. Pinner somehow began to be sure the lady in the carriage hadn't been a lady at all, but something quite different, something terrible and wicked, who had carried Sally off into the sort of place one doesn't mention. He remembered her black eyes, and how they rolled——

' Rolled, eh ? ' said Mr. Thorpe, who was snatching at Mr. Pinner's words almost before they appeared, trembling, on the edge of his mouth.

Yes—rolled. And bold-looking, she was too,—bold-looking, and pat as you please at answering. Not Mr. Pinner's idea at all of a modest woman. Yes, and the compartment smelt of scent, now he came to think of it

—yes, he dared say it was cheap scent. And powdered, her face was—he had remarked on it to himself, after the train had gone.

Thus did Mr. Thorpe's own fears get by cross-examination into Mr. Pinner's mind, and by the end of the half hour Mr. Pinner was as much convinced as Mr. Thorpe that Sally had fallen into the hands of somebody of whom Mr. Thorpe used an expression that Mr. Pinner wouldn't have soiled his lips with for any sum one cared to mention. And then, after swearing at him, and asking him what sort of a father he thought he was, and Mr. Pinner, who by this time was wishing with all his heart that he wasn't a father at all, tremblingly begging him not to blaspheme, Mr. Thorpe went away.

'What 'ad I better do now, sir?' Mr. Pinner asked, following him out on to the steps in much distress, clinging to him in spite of his horrifying language.

'You? What can *you* do? You've done your damnedest——'

'Sir, sir——'

And he got into his car, and Mr. Pinner heard him tell the chauffeur to drive like the devil to London and go to Liverpool Street Station; and it seemed as if in a flash the street were empty, and he alone.

§

That afternoon Mr. Pinner himself arrived at Liverpool Street Station—an anxious little man in his Sunday clothes, his blue eyes staring with anxiety. He couldn't just stay in his shop, and as likely as not never hear anything more, either one way or the other. He must do something. He must ask questions. Nobody would tell him if Sally were found or not, if he didn't. She

herself might some day perhaps drop him a line, but she wasn't much of a one for writing, and besides he had been harsh to her. 'Don't believe you loves me,' she had said, crying bitterly when he scolded her so and wouldn't let her stay with him. Love her? He loved her dearly. She was all he had in the world. If anything had happened to that girl——

He timidly stopped a porter, and began to inquire. The porter, who was busy, stared at him and hurried on. He then tried a guard, who said, 'Eh?' very loud, looked past him along the platform, waved a green flag, jumped on to a train, and departed.

He then tried another porter; several porters; and at last, more timid than ever by this time, approached a ticket-collector.

Nobody seemed to have time for Mr. Pinner. His trousers were against him. So was his hat; so was everything he said and did. The ticket-collector, who didn't like shabbiness and meekness, ignored him. He knew perfectly well who Mr. Pinner was talking about, for the whole station was invariably aware of any of the Duke's family passing through it, and everybody the day before had seen Lady Laura and the young lady. Mr. Pinner hadn't got beyond his first words of description before the ticket-collector knew what he was driving at, but he only looked down his long nose at the flushed little man in the corkscrew trousers, and said nothing. Give a thing like that information about her ladyship's movements? Not much.

Yet this same ticket-collector, only an hour or two before, had been wax in the gloved hands of Mr. Thorpe, and with these words had parted from him:

'Thank you, sir. Don't mention it, sir. No trouble

at all. Yes—a very striking young lady indeed, sir. Her ladyship was going to Goring House for a couple of days, so the chauffeur told me. Much obliged, sir. Yes, sir—Lady Laura Moulsford. That's right, sir—the Duke of Goring's daughter.'

This same ticket-collector had said all that; and to Mr. Pinner he said not a word. He merely down his long nose looked at him, and when the little man explained that he was the fair young lady's father he looked at him more glassily than ever. So that presently for very shame Mr. Pinner couldn't go on standing there asking questions that got no answers, and after lingering awhile uncertainly in the ticket-collector's neighbourhood, for something told him that this man could throw light on Sally's disappearance if he would, he went sorrowfully, but unresentfully, away.

Presently he found himself in South Winch. He seemed to have drifted there, not knowing what to do or where to go next, and unable to bear the thought of his lonely shop and of nobody's letting him know about anything. He had thought it fine and peaceful at first to be independent and at last alone, but it didn't seem so now. He missed his wife. Nobody now to mind what he did, good or bad. Nobody.

In South Winch he sought out the grocer, so as to get Jocelyn's address, preferring him to the Post Office because the smell of currants and bacon made him feel less lonely, and, having followed the directions the grocer gave him, found the road and the house, and opened the white gate with deferential trepidation. Timidly at the door he asked if he might say a word to Mr. Luke, and the little maid, at once at ease with his sort of clothes, inquired pleasantly if Mrs. Luke wouldn't do

just as well; better, suggested the little maid, because she was there, and Mr. Jocelyn wasn't. In fact she offered Mrs. Luke to Mr. Pinner, she pressed her upon him,—a lady he wouldn't have dreamt of disturbing if left to himself.

So that Mr. Pinner, without apparently in the least wanting to, found himself in a beautiful drawing-room, and there by the fire sat a lady, leaning back on some cushions as though she were tired.

At first he thought she was asleep, and he was beginning to feel extremely awkward when she turned her head and looked at him.

A pale lady. A very pale lady; with a face that seemed all eyes.

'Beg pardon, mum,' said Mr. Pinner, wishing he hadn't come.

The lady went on looking at him. She didn't move. Her hands were hanging down over the arms of the chair as though she were tired. She just turned her head, but didn't move else.

'It's about Sally,' said Mr. Pinner. ''Appened to be passin', and thought I'd——'

He stopped, for now he came to think of it he didn't rightly know what he had thought.

The lady leant forward in her chair. 'Do you know where she is?' she asked quickly.

'No, mum. Do you?' asked Mr. Pinner.

'No,' said the lady in a queer sort of voice, her head drooping.

Mr. Pinner stood there very awkward indeed.

'Are you her father?' she asked, after a minute.

'That's right, mum,' said Mr. Pinner.

Then she got up and came across to him.

'I'm afraid you are very unhappy,' she said, looking at him.

'That's right, mum,' said Mr. Pinner.

She held out her hand, her eyes on his face.

He shook it respectfully, but without enthusiasm.

'Why, you're cold,' she said.

'That's right, mum,' said Mr. Pinner.

'Won't you come to the fire and get warm?' she said; and before he had time to consider what he ought to do next, Mr. Pinner found himself sitting on the edge of the low chair the lady pushed up for him, warming his knees and not saying anything.

The lady talked a little. She had some nice hot tea made for him, and while he drank it talked a little, and said she was sure they would hear good news soon, and he mustn't worry, because she was sure . . .

Then she fell silent too, and they sat there together looking into the fire; and it was funny, thought Mr. Pinner, how just to sit there quietly, and know she was sorry too about everything, seemed to make him feel better. A kind lady; a good lady. What did Sally mean, saying he wouldn't be able to stand her either, if he knew her? The only thing wrong with her that Mr. Pinner could see, was that she looked so ill. Half dead, thought Mr. Pinner.

And after being with her he had more courage to go back to the lonely shop, and she promised faithfully to let him know the minute there was any news, and again told him not to worry and everything would come all right, and he went away comforted.

And she, watching him as he trotted off down to the gate, felt somehow comforted too; not quite so lonely; not quite so lost.

§

Meanwhile Mr. Thorpe, having lunched and tidied and generally freshened himself up, was on the steps of Goring House, asking for Lady Laura Moulsford.

'Her ladyship is hout,' said the footman haughtily, for he knew at once when Mr. Thorpe added the word Moulsford that he was what the footman called not one of Our Lot. No good his having a car waiting there, and a fur coat, and suède gloves; he simply wasn't one of Our Lot. And the footman, his head thrown back, looked at Mr. Thorpe very much as the ticket-collector was at that moment looking at Mr. Pinner.

'Out, eh?' said Mr. Thorpe. 'When will she be in?'

'Her ladyship didn't say,' said the footman, his head well back.

'You've got a young lady here of the name of Luke. She in?'

'Mrs. Luke is hout,' said the footman, beginning to shut the door.

'Is anybody in?' asked Mr. Thorpe, getting angry.

'The family is hout,' said the footman; and was going to shut the door quite when Mr. Thorpe went close up to him and damned him. And because Mr. Thorpe's temper was quick and hot he damned him thoroughly, and the footman, as he heard the familiar words, strongly reminiscent not only of Lord Streatley but also of the different sergeants he had had during the war, who, however unlike each other to look at, were identical to listen to, thought he must be one of Lady Laura's friends after all, and began to open the door again; and Mr. Thorpe advancing, damning as he went and saying things about flunkeys that were new to the footman, entered that

marble hall which had struck such a chill into Sally's unaspiring soul.

The butler appeared. The butler was suave where the footman had been haughty. He had heard some of the things Mr. Thorpe was saying as he hurried from his private sitting-room into the echoing hall, and had no doubt that he was a friend of the family's.

Lady Laura had been in to lunch, but had gone out again; Mrs. Luke was motoring with Lord Charles—who the devil was *he*, Mr. Thorpe wondered—down to Crippenham, where she was going to stay the night. Her ladyship had had a telegram from his lordship to that effect, and she herself was going down the following morning.

'Where's Crippenham?' asked Mr. Thorpe.

The butler was surprised. Up to that moment he had taken Mr. Thorpe for a friend, if an infrequent one, of Lady Laura's.

'His Grace's Cambridgeshire seat,' he said, in his turn with *hauteur*. 'His Grace is at present in residence.'

'Crikey!' thought Mr. Thorpe. 'Got right in with the Duke himself, has she?' And he felt fonder of Sally than ever.

§

At this point Mr. Thorpe, who had been behaving so well, began to behave less well. The minute the pressure of anxiety was relaxed, the minute, that is, that he no longer suffered, he became callous to the sufferings of the Lukes; and instead of at once letting them know what he had discovered he kept it to himself, he hugged his secret, and deferred sending till some hours later a telegram to each of them saying, '*Hot on her tracks.*'

Quite enough, thought Mr. Thorpe, as jolly again as a sand-boy, and immediately unable to imagine the world other than populated by sand-boys equally jolly,—quite enough that would be to go on with, quite enough to make them both feel better. If he told them more, they'd get rushing off to Crippenham and disturbing the Duke's house-party. The whole thing should now be allowed to simmer, said Mr. Thorpe to himself. Sally should be given a fair field with her duke, and not have relations coming barging in and interrupting.

But what a girl, thought Mr. Thorpe, slapping his knee—he was in his car, on the way to his club—what a girl. She only had to meet dukes for them to go down like ninepins at her feet. Apart from her beauty, what spirit, what daring, what initiative, what resource! It had been worth all the anxiety, this magnificent *dénouement*. Safe, and sounder than ever. A glorious girl; and he too had at once seen how glorious she was, and at once, like the Duke, fallen at her feet. That girl, thought Mr. Thorpe, who began to believe she would rise triumphant even over a handicap like Jocelyn, might do anything, might do any mortal thing,—no end at all, there wasn't, to what that girl couldn't do. And, glowing, he telephoned to Scotland Yard, and later on, after having had his tea and played a rubber of bridge, sent his telegrams.

Then he went quietly home. Things should simmer. Things must now be left to themselves a little. He went quietly home to Abergeldie, and didn't let Mrs. Luke know he was there. Her feelings, he considered, were sufficiently relieved for the present by his telegram; things must now be allowed to simmer. And he took a little walk in his shrubbery, and then had a hot bath,

and dressed, and dined, ordering up a pint of the 1911 *Cordon Rouge*, and sat down afterwards with a great sigh of satisfaction by his library fire.

He smoked, and he thought; and the only thing he regretted in the whole business was the rude name he had called Lady Laura Moulsford to that fool Pinner. But, long as he smoked and thought, it never occurred to him to resent, or even to criticise, the conduct of the Moulsford family. Strange as it may seem, considering that family's black behaviour, Mr. Thorpe dwelt on it in his mind with nothing but complacency.

XV

§

At Crippenham next morning it was very fine. London and South Winch were in a mist, but the sun shone brightly in Cambridgeshire, and the Duke woke up with a curiously youthful feeling of eagerness to get up quickly and go downstairs. He knew he couldn't do anything quickly, but the odd thing was that for years and years he hadn't wanted to, and that now suddenly he did want to; and just to want to was both pleasant and remarkable.

He had been thinking in the night,—or, rather, Charles's thoughts, placed so insistently before him, had sunk in and become indistinguishable from his own; and he had thought so much that he hadn't gone to sleep till nearly five. But then he slept soundly, and woke up to find his room flooded with sunshine, and to feel this curiously agreeable eagerness to be up and doing.

The evening before, when Charles came in from the garden and packed his bewitching guest off to bed, he had been very cross, and had listened peevishly to all his son was explaining and pointing out; not because he wasn't interested, or because he resented the suggestions being made, but simply because the moment that girl left the room it was as if the light had gone out,—the light, and the fire. She needn't have obeyed

Charles. Why should she obey Charles? She might have stayed with him a little longer, warming him by the sight of her beauty and her youth. The instant she went he felt old and cold; back again in the condition he was in before she arrived, dropped back again into age and listlessness, and, however stoutly he pretended it wasn't so, into a deathly chill.

Now that, thought the Duke, himself surprised at the difference his guest's not being in the room made, was what had happened to David too towards the end. They didn't read it in the Lessons in church on Sundays, but he nevertheless quite well remembered, from his private inquisitive study of the Bible in his boyhood, how they covered David when he was old with clothes but he got no heat, and only a young person called the Shunammite was able, by her near presence, to warm him. The Duke didn't ask such nearness as had been the Shunammite's to David, for he, perhaps because he was less old, found all he needed of renewed life by merely looking at Sally; but he did, remembering David while Charles talked, feel aggrieved that so little as this, so little as merely wishing to look at her, should be taken from him, and she sent to bed at ten o'clock.

So he was cross, and pretended not to understand, and anyhow not to be interested. But he had understood very well, and in the watches of the night had come to his decision. At his age it wouldn't do to be too long coming to decisions; if he wished to secure the beautiful young creature—Charles said help, but does not helping, by means of the resultant obligations, also secure?—he must be quick.

He rang for his servant half an hour before the usual time. He wanted to get up, to go to her again, to look

at her, to sit near her and have her fragrant, lovely youth flowing round him. The mere thought of Sally made him feel happier and more awake than he had felt for years. Better than the fortnight's cure of silence and diet at Crippenham was one look at Sally, one minute spent with Sally. And she was so kind and intelligent, as well as so beautiful—listening to every word he said with the most obvious interest, and not once fidgeting or getting sleepy, as people nowadays seemed to have got into the habit of doing. It was like sitting in the sun to be with her; like sitting in the sun on a warm spring morning, and freshness everywhere, and flowers, and hope.

Naturally, having found this draught of new life the Duke wasn't going to let it go. On the contrary, it was his firm intention, with all the strength and obstinacy still in him, to stick to Sally. How fortunate that she was poor, and he could be the one to help her. For she, owing all her happiness to him, couldn't but let him often be with her. Charles had said it would be both new and desirable to do something in one's life for nothing; but the Duke doubted if it were ever possible, however much one wished to, to do anything for nothing. In the case of Sally it was manifestly impossible. Whatever he did, whatever he gave, he would be getting far more back; for she by her friendship, and perhaps affection, and anyhow by her presence, would be giving him life.

'Come out into the garden, my dear,' he said, when he had been safely helped downstairs—the stairs were each time an adventure—putting his shaking hand through her arm. 'I want to see your hair in the sun, while I talk to you.'

And leading him carefully out, Sally thought, 'Poor

old gentleman,' and minded nothing at all that he said. Her hair, her eyes, all that *Oh my ain't you beautiful* business, of which she was otherwise both sick and afraid, didn't matter in him she called the Jewk. He was just a poor old gentleman, an ancient and practically helpless baby, towards whom she felt like a compassionate mother ; and when he said, sitting in the sunny sheltered seat she had lowered him on to and taking her hand and looking at her with his watery old eyes, that he was going to give her Crippenham, and that the only condition he made was that he might come and do a rest-cure there rather often, she smiled and nodded as sweetly and kindly as she smiled and nodded at everything else he said.

Like the croonings of a baby were the utterances of the Duke in Sally's ears ; no more meaning in them, no more weight to be attached to them, than that. Give her Crippenham ? Poor old gentleman. Didn't know what he was talking about any more, poor old dear. She humoured him ; she patted his arm ; and she wished to goodness Laura would be quick and come and take her to her husband.

Sally now longed to get to Jocelyn as much as if she had passionately loved him. He was her husband. He was the father of the little baby. Her place was with him. She had had enough of this fleshpot business. She was homesick for the things she knew,—plain things, simple things, duties she understood. Kind, yes ; kind as kind, the picks were, and they meant well ; but she had had enough. It wasn't right it wasn't, at least it wasn't right for her, to live so fat. What would her father have said if he had seen her in the night in Laura's bedroom, among all that lot of silver bottles and brushes

and laces and silks, and herself in a thin silk nightgown the colour of skin, making her look stark naked ? What would he have said if he had seen her having her breakfast up there as though she were ill,—and such a breakfast, too ! Fleshpots, he'd have said ; fleshpots. And he would have said, Sally, strong if inaccurate in her Bible, was sure, that she had sold her husband for a mess of fleshpots.

This was no life for her, this was no place for her, she thought, her head bowed and the sun playing at games of miracles with her hair while the Duke talked. She drew impatient patterns with the tip of her shoe on the gravel. She hardly listened. Her ear was cocked for the first sounds of Laura. She ached to have done with all this wasting of time, she ached to be in her own home, getting on with her job of looking after her man and preparing for her child. ' Saturday today,' she mused, such a lovely look coming into her eyes that the Duke, watching her, was sure it was his proposed gift making her divinely happy. ' We'd be 'avin' shepherd's pie for dinner—or p'raps a nice little bit of fish. . . .'

And, coming out of that pleasant dream with a sigh, she thought, ' Oughtn't never to 'ave met none of these 'ere. All comes of runnin' away from dooty.'

Apologetically she turned her head and looked at the Duke, for she had forgotten him for a moment, besides having been thinking on lines that were hardly grateful. Poor old gentleman—still keeping on about giving her Crippenham. Crippenham ? She'd as soon have the cleaning of Buckingham Palace while she was about it as of that great, frightening house—or, come to that, of a prison.

But how like a bad dream it was, being kept there with

the morning slipping past, and she unable to reach him across the gulf of his deafness. By eleven o'clock she was quite pale with unhappiness, she could hardly bear it any longer. Would she have to give manners the go-by and take to her heels once more? This time, though, there would be no kind father-in-law to lend her a car; this time she would have to walk,—walk all the way, and then when she got there find Jocelyn unaided. And the old gentleman kept on and on about Crippenham being hers, and everything in it. . . .

'E's nothin' but a nimage,' she said to herself in despair. 'Sits 'ere like a old idol. Wot do *'e* know about a married woman's dooties?'

'Where's Charles?' asked the Duke.

Sally shook her head. She hadn't seen a sign of him that morning.

'I want him to get my solicitor down—no time to lose,' said the Duke. 'You're to have the place lock, stock and barrel, my dear, such as it is—servants and all.'

Servants and all? Poor old gentleman. Why, she wouldn't know which end of a servant to start with. She with servants? And these ones here who, however hard she tried up there in the bedroom, wouldn't make friends. They called her Madam. She Madam? Oh, my gracious, thought Sally, shrinking in horror from such a dreadful picture.

'It's a hole of a place,' went on the Duke, 'and quite unworthy of you, but we can have more bathrooms put in, and it'll do till we find something you like better. And Charles tells me you married rather suddenly, and haven't got anywhere to go to at present. He also says you have to live close to Cambridge, because of your

husband's studies. And he also says, and I entirely agree with him, my dear, that you oughtn't to be in Cambridge itself, but somewhere more secluded—somewhere where you won't be seen quite so much, somewhere hidden, in fact. Now I think, I really do think, that Crippenham, in spite of all its disadvantages, does exactly fulfil these requirements. And I want you to have it, my dear—to take it as my wedding present to you, and to live in it very happily, and bless it and make it beautiful by your presence.'

Thus the Duke.

'''E don't 'alf *talk*,' thought Sally, quivering to be gone.

§

Charles, on being sent for by the Duke, was nowhere to be found. That was because he was in South Winch. He had gone off at daybreak in his car, and at the very moment his father woke up to the fact of his absence and asked where he was, he was standing in the drawing-room at Almond Tree Cottage, his eyes fixed eagerly on the door, waiting for Mrs. Luke.

He hadn't been able to sleep for thinking of her. Somehow he had got it into his head that she, more than her son, would suffer through Sally's disappearance, and be afraid. Because, thought Charles, she would feel that it was from her the girl had run, and that any misfortune that might happen to her would be, terribly, laid at her door. For two whole days and two whole nights that unfortunate woman must have gone through torture. What Charles couldn't understand was why he hadn't thought of this before. Indeed his and Laura's conduct had been utterly unpardonable. The least he could now do, he thought,

as he lay wide awake throughout the night, was to get to South Winch without losing a minute, and put Mrs. Luke out of her misery, and beg her forgiveness.

She was in the garden when he arrived. The little maid, staring at the card he asked her to take to her mistress, said she would fetch her, and ushered him into the drawing-room, where he waited with the books, the bright cushions, the Tiepolo, and two withered tulips in a glass from which nearly all the water had dried away; and while he waited he fought with a feeling he considered most contemptible, in face of the facts, that he was somehow on an errand of mercy, and arriving with healing in his wings,—that he was somehow a benefactor.

Sternly he told himself he ought to feel nothing but shame; sternly he tried to suppress his glow of misplaced self-satisfaction. There was nothing good about him and Laura in this business. They had, the pair of them, been criminally impulsive and selfish. He knew it; he acknowledged it. Yet here he was, secretly glowing, his eyes watching the door, as much excited as if he were going to bestow a most magnificently generous, unexpected present.

Then it opened, and Mrs. Luke came in. He was sure it was Mrs. Luke, for no one else could look so unhappy; and the glow utterly vanished, and the feeling of shame and contrition became overwhelming.

'She's safe,' said Charles quickly, eager to put a stop at once to the expression in her eyes. 'She's at my father's. She's going to Cambridge today to your son. She's been with us the whole time——'

And he went to her, and took her hand and kissed it.

'If it weren't so ridiculous,' he said, his face flushed with painful contrition, still holding her hand and looking

into her heavy, dark-ringed eyes, ' I'd very much like to go down on my knees to you, and beg your pardon.'

§

And while Charles was in South Winch, Laura was in Cambridge, dealing with Jocelyn. She, like Charles, had become conscious of the sufferings of the Lukes, and, like him, was obsessed by them and lost in astonishment that she hadn't thought of them sooner ; but for some obscure reason, or instinct, her compunctions and her sympathies were for Jocelyn rather than for his mother, and after a second sleepless night, during which she was haunted by the image of the unfortunate young husband and greatly tormented, she went down, much chastened, to Cambridge by the first possible train, with only one desire now, to put him out of his misery and beg his forgiveness.

So that Jocelyn, sitting doing nothing, his untouched breakfast still littering the table, sitting bent forward in the basket-chair common to the rooms of young men at Cambridge, his thin hands gripped so hard round his knees that the knuckles showed white, his ears strained for the slightest sound on the staircase, his eyes hollow from want of sleep, sitting as he had sat all the previous afternoon after getting Mr. Thorpe's telegram and most of the night, sitting waiting, listening, and perhaps for the first time in his life, for his mother had not included religious exercises in his early education, doing something not unlike praying, did at last hear a woman's step crossing Austen's Court, hesitating at what he felt sure was his corner, then slowly coming up his staircase, and hesitating again at the first floor.

All the blood in his body seemed to rush to his head

and throb there. His heart thumped so loud that he could hardly hear the steps any more. He struggled out of his low chair and stood listening, holding on to it to steady himself. Would they come up higher? Yes—they were coming up. Yes—it must be Sally. Sally—oh, oh, *Sally*!

He flew to the door, pulled it open, and saw—Laura.

'It's all right,' she panted, for the stairs were steep and she was fat, 'it is—about Sally—don't look so——' she stopped to get her breath—'so dreadfully disappointed. She's safe. If you'll—oh, what *stairs*——' she pressed her hand to her heaving bosom—'come with me, I'll—take you—to her——'

And having got to the top, she staggered past him into his room, and dropped into the basket-chair, and for a minute or two did nothing but gasp.

But how difficult she found him. Jocelyn, whose reactions were always violent, behaved very differently from the way his mother at that moment was behaving, placed in the same situation of being asked forgiveness by a Moulsford. Instead of forgiving, of being, as Laura had pictured, so much delighted at the prospect of soon having Sally restored to him that he didn't mind anything, he appeared to mind very much, and quarrelled with her. She, accustomed to have everything she did that was perhaps a little wrong condoned and overlooked by all classes except her own, was astonished. Here she was, doing a thing she had never done before, begging a young man to forgive her, and he wouldn't. On the contrary, he rated her. Rated her! Her, Laura Moulsford. She knew that much is forgiven those above by those below, and had frequently deplored the practice as one that has sometimes held up progress, but now

that the opposite was being done to herself she didn't like it at all.

'Oh, what a nasty disposition you've got!' she cried at last, when Jocelyn had been telling her for ten impassioned minutes, leaning against the chimney-piece and glowering down at her with eyes flashing with indignation, what he thought of her. 'I'm glad now, instead of sorry, for what I did. At least Sally has had two days less of you.'

'If you're going to rag me as well——' began Jocelyn, taking a quick step forward as if to seize and shake this fat little incredibly officious stranger,—so like him, his mother would have said, to waste time being furious instead of at once making her take him to Sally.

But Laura, unacquainted with his ways, was astonished.

Then he pulled himself up. 'It's not you I'm cursing really at all,' he said. 'It's myself.'

'Well, I don't mind that,' said Laura, smiling.

'I've got the beastliest temper,' said Jocelyn.

'So I see,' said Laura.

'Do you think,' he asked, for in spite of his anger he was all soft and bruised underneath after his two days of fear, and when the fat stranger smiled there was something very motherly about her, 'I shall ever get over it?'

'Perhaps if you try—try hard.'

'But—look here, I don't care what you say—what *business* had you to make away with my wife?'

'Now you're beginning all over again.'

'Make away with my wife, smash up everything between me and my mother——'

'Oh, *oh*——' interrupted Laura, stopping up her ears, and bowing her head before the storm.

§

It was ten more minutes before she got him out of his rooms and into a taxi.

'We've lost twenty minutes,' she said, looking at her watch. 'You've lost twenty kisses you might have had——'

'For God's *sake* don't rag me!' cried Jocelyn, gripping her by the arm and bundling her into the taxi.

'But what,' asked Laura, who had tumbled in a heap on the seat, yet who didn't mind being thrown in because she knew she deserved worse than that, 'what else can one do with a creature like you?'

And she told him very seriously, as they heaved along towards Crippenham, that the real mistake had been Sally's marrying beneath her.

'Beneath her?' repeated Jocelyn, staring.

'Isn't it apparent?' said Laura. 'Angels should only marry other angels, and not descend to entanglements with perfectly ordinary——'

'No, I'm damned if I'm ordinary,' thought Jocelyn. 'And who the devil is *she*, anyhow?'

'Bad-tempered,' continued Laura.

'Yes, I'm beastly bad-tempered,' he admitted.

'Conceited——'

'I swear I'm not conceited,' he said.

'Aren't you?' said Laura, turning her head and scrutinising him with bright, mocking eyes.

And then, coming swift and silent as an arrow along the road towards their taxi, she saw her father's car.

'Oh, stop!' she cried, leaping to her feet and thrusting as much of herself as would go through the

window. 'Here's my father—yes, and Sally. Stop—oh, *stop*!' she cried, frantically waving her arms.

§

It had been decreed by Fate that Jocelyn should be reunited to Sally in the middle of the road just beyond Waterbeach, at the point where the lane to Lyddiatt's Farm turns off; for such was the Duke's desire to help his lovely friend and such his infatuation, that he had actually broken his rule of never emerging from Crippenham, once he got there, till the day appointed for his departure, and was himself taking her to Ananias to hand her over in person to her husband, afterwards lunching with the Master,—a thing unheard of, this lunching, for the Duke disliked the Master's politics and the Master disliked the Duke's, but what wouldn't one do to further the interests, by saying a good word for them, of the young couple?

This he had arranged that morning before coming downstairs, his amazed servant telephoning the message and receiving the Master's hypocritical expressions of pleasure in return, for apart from the Duke's politics the Master was no fonder of a deaf guest than anybody else; and just as Sally, on that garden seat, was coming to the end of her patience and submissiveness and was seriously thinking of jumping up and taking to her heels, the parlourmaid appeared on the path; and when she was quite close she stood still, and opened her mouth very wide, and roared out that the car was at the door; and the Duke, with a final pat of benediction, bade Sally fetch her hat, and come with him to her husband.

So there it was that they met,—the taxi and the

Rolls Royce, Laura and Jocelyn, Sally and the Duke. And on the Swaffham Prior side of Waterbeach, where the crooked signpost points to Lyddiatt's Farm, the dull, empty road was made radiant for a moment that day by happiness.

'Stop! Stop!' cried Laura, frantically waving.

'Sally! Oh—oh, *Sally*!' shouted Jocelyn, standing up too, and trying too, behind Laura, to wave.

The chauffeur recognised Laura, and pulled up as soon as he could; the taxi pulled up with a great grinding of its brakes; Jocelyn jumped out of one door, and Laura of the other; and both ran.

'Why,' said Sally, who didn't know what had happened, turning her head and looking in astonishment at the two running figures coming along behind, 'why,' she said, forgetting the Duke was deaf, ''ere *is* Mr. Luke——'

And in another instant Jocelyn was there, up on the step of the car, leaning over the side, dragging her to him with both arms, hugging her to his heart, and kissing her as if there were no one in the world except themselves.

'Sally—oh, my *darling*! Oh, Sally—oh, oh, *Sally*!' cried Jocelyn, raining kisses on her between each word. 'How could you—why did you—oh, yes—I know, I know—I've been a beast to you—but I'm not going to be any more—I swear, I swear——'

'Now don't, Mr Luke,' Sally managed to say, stifled though she was, 'don't get swearin' about it——'

And pulling her head away from him she was able to attend to the proprieties, and introduce him.

'My 'usband,' introduced Sally, looking over his arm, which was round her neck, at the old man beside

her. 'The Jewk,' she said, turning her face back to Jocelyn, who took no notice of the introduction, who didn't indeed hear, because the moment she turned her face—oh, her divine, divine little face!—back to him, he fell to kissing it again.

And Laura, coming panting up just then, got up on the step on the other side of the car, and shouted in her father's ear, who could always hear everything she said, 'This is Jocelyn Luke, Father—Sally's husband.'

And the Duke said, 'I thought it must be.'

XVI

§

Now the end of this story, which is only the very beginning of Sally, the merest introduction to her, for it isn't to be supposed that nothing more happened in her life,—the end of it is that she did as she was told about Crippenham, and if the Duke had been less than ninety-three there would have been a scandal.

But after ninety there is little scandal. The worst that was said of the Lukes was that they had got hold of the old man, and nobody who saw Sally believed that. Indeed, the instant anyone set eyes on her the Duke's behaviour was accounted for, and after five minutes in her company it became crystal clear that she was incapable of getting hold of anybody. So young, so shy, so acquiescent,—absurd to suppose she ever had such a thing as an ulterior motive. And the husband, too; impossible to imagine that silent scholar, also so young, and rather shy too, or else very sulky,—impossible to imagine him plotting. On the contrary, he didn't seem to like what had happened to him much, and showed no signs whatever either of pleasure or gratitude. But of Jocelyn no one thought long. He was without interest for the great world. He was merely an obscure young man at Cambridge, somebody the Duke's amazing beauty had married.

Sally did, then, as she was told about Crippenham. It was given her, and she took it; or rather, for her attitude was one of complete passivity, it became hers. But she had an unsuspected simple tenacity of purpose, which was later to develop disconcertingly, and she refused to live anywhere except in the four-roomed cottage in the corner of the garden, built years before as a playhouse for Laura and Charles.

On this one point she was like a rock; a polite rock, against which persuasions, though received sweetly and amiably, should beat in vain. So the Duke had the little house fitted up with every known labour-saving appliance, none of which Sally would use because of having been brought up to believe only in elbow-grease, and two bathrooms, one for her and one for Jocelyn; and he attached such importance to these bathrooms, and he insisted so obstinately on their being built, that Sally could only conclude the picks must need a terrible lot of washing. Whited sepulchres they must be, she secretly thought; looking as clean as clean outside, fit to eat one's dinner off if it came to that, but evidently nothing but show and take-in.

The Duke, much concerned at first, settled down to this determination of Sally's, and explained it to himself by remembering Marie-Antoinette. She had her Trianon. She too had played, as Sally wished to play, at being simple. He consoled himself by speaking of the cottage as Little Trianon; a name Sally accepted with patience, though she told Jocelyn—who was so much stunned at the strange turn his life had taken that she found she could be quite chatty with him, and he never corrected, and never even said anything back—she wouldn't have thought of herself. Some day, the Duke was sure, the

marvellous child would grow up and get tired of her Trianon, and then, when she wanted to move into the house, she should find Versailles all ready for her, and very different from what it used to be.

So, on the excuse of seeing to the alterations, he was hardly ever away from Crippenham, and if he had been less than ninety-three there would certainly have been a scandal.

But Jocelyn, who woke up after the wild joy and relief of being reunited to Sally to find himself the permanent guest of a duke, didn't know whether to be pleased or annoyed. The problems of his and Sally's existence were solved, it was true, but he wasn't sure that he didn't prefer the problems. He rubbed his eyes. This was fantastic. It had no relation to real life, which was the life of hard work and constant progress in his cloister at Ananias. Also, its topsy-turviness bewildered him. Here was the Duke, convinced that Sally had married beneath her, and so unshakably convinced that Jocelyn had enormous difficulty in not beginning to believe it too. He couldn't help being impressed by the Duke. He had never met a duke before, never come within miles of meeting one, and was impressed. That first afternoon, when he had been carried off in the Rolls Royce to Crippenham, he had spent the time between luncheon and tea shut up in the old man's study being upbraided for having taken advantage, as he was severely told, of Sally's youth and inexperience and motherlessness to persuade her into a marriage which was obviously socially disastrous for her; and he couldn't even if he had wished to, which he certainly didn't, tell him about Mr. Pinner, because he couldn't get through the barrier of his deafness. There the old

man had sat, with beetling brows and great stern voice, booming away at him hour after hour, and there Jocelyn had sat, young, helpless, silent, his forehead beaded with perspiration, listening to a description, among other things, of the glories which would have been Sally's if he hadn't inveigled her into marrying him. And so sure was the Duke of his facts, and so indignant, that gradually Jocelyn began to think there was something in it, and every moment felt more of a blackguard. In the old man's eyes, he asked himself, would there be much difference between him and Pinner? And was there, in anybody's eyes, much difference? More education; that was all. But of family, in the Duke's sense, he had as little as Pinner, and if Pinner had been to a decent school, as Jocelyn had, and then gone to Cambridge—no, Oxford for Pinner—he would probably have cut quite as good a figure, if not in science then in something else; perhaps as a distinguished cleric.

He sat dumb and perspiring, feeling increasingly guilty; and if he could have answered back he wouldn't have, because the Duke made him feel meek.

This meekness, however, didn't last. It presently, after a period of bewilderment, gave way to something very like resentment, which in its turn developed into a growing conviction that he had become just a cat's paw,—he who, if left to himself, could have done almost anything.

Naturally he didn't like this. But how, for the moment, could he help it? Sally was going to have a baby. They had to live somewhere. It was really heaven-sent, the whole thing. Yet—Sally, whom he had been going to mould, was moulding him. Unconsciously; nothing to do with any intention or desire of

her own. And what she was moulding him into, thought Jocelyn, as he drove himself backwards and forwards every day between Crippenham and Cambridge, between his domestic life and his work, between the strange mixture of emotions at the one end and the clear peace and self-respect at the other, turning over in his mind with knitted brows, as he drove, all that had happened to him in the brief weeks since he had added Sally to his life—what she was moulding him into was a cat's paw.

Yes. Just that.

Were all husbands cat's paws ?

Probably, thought Jocelyn.

§

Mrs. Luke also reacted to the Moulsfords in terms of meekness. Hers, however, lasted. She found them permanently dazzling. Besides, there was nothing to be done. Jocelyn had gone ; she had lost him for ever ; he would never come back, she very well knew, to the old life of dependence on her. And if he must go, if she must lose him, there really was no one in the world she would more willingly lose him to than the Duke of Goring. For certainly it was a splendid, an exalted losing.

When she had had time to think after that visit from Lord Charles—he had, she considered, a curious attractiveness—and was more herself again, when she had recovered a little from the extreme misery she had gone through and began not to feel quite so ill, she found it easy to forgive her *mauvais quart d'heure.* The Moulsfords were heaping benefits on her boy. They were settling all his difficulties. That morning when she was

so unhappy, Lord Charles had been most delightfully kind and sympathetic, and had told her that the Duke, his father, intended to help the young couple,—'You know my son won this year's Rutherford Prize,' she had said. 'Indeed I do,' he had answered in his charming, eager way, adding how much interested his father was in the careers of brilliant young men, especially at Cambridge, helping them in any way he could—and who would not, in such circumstances, forgive?

Mrs. Luke forgave.

The fact, however, remained that she was now alone, and she couldn't think what her life was going to be without Jocelyn. For how, she wondered, did one live without an object, with no *raison d'être* of any sort? How did one live after one has left off being needed?

That year the spring was late and cold. The days dragged along, each one emptier than the last. There was nothing in them at all; no reason, hardly, why one should so much as get up every morning and dress for days like that,—pithless, coreless, dead days. She tried to comfort herself by remembering that at least she wasn't any longer beaten down and humiliated, that she could lift her head and look South Winch in the face, and look it in the face more proudly than ever before; but even that seemed to have lost its savour. Still, she mustn't grumble. This happened to all mothers sooner or later, this casting loose, this final separation, and to none, she was sure, had it ever happened more magnificently. She mustn't grumble. She must be very thankful. She *was* very thankful. Like Toussaint l'Ouverture—Wordsworth, again—she had, she said to herself, sitting solitary through the chilly spring evenings by her fire after yet another empty day, great allies; only

fortunately of a different kind from poor Toussaint's, for however highly one might regard, theoretically, exultations and agonies and love and man's unconquerable mind, she, for her part, preferred the Moulsfords.

But did she ?

A bleak little doubt crept into her mind. As the weeks passed, the doubt grew bleaker. Invisible Moulsfords ; Moulsfords delightful and most friendly when one met them, but whom one never did meet ; Moulsfords full of almost intimacies ; Moulsfords who said they were coming to see one again, and didn't come ; Moulsfords benignant, but somewhere else : were these in the long run, except as subjects of carefully modest conversation in South Winch—and South Winch, curiously, while it was plainly awe-struck by what had happened to Jocelyn yet was also definitely less friendly than it used to be—were these in the long run as life-giving, as satisfying, as fundamentally *filling* as Toussaint's exultations and agonies ?

Ah, one had to *feel* ; feel positively, feel acutely. Anything, anything, any anger, any pain, any anxiety, any exasperation, anything at all that stabbed one alive, was better than this awful numbness, this empty, deadly, settled, stagnant, back-water calm. . . .

And one evening, when it had been raining all day, after a period of standing at the drawing-room window looking out at the dripping front garden, where the almond-tree by the gate shivered in the grey twilight like a frail, half-naked ghost, she turned and went to her writing-table, and sat down and wrote a little note to Mr. Thorpe, and asked if he would not come in after his dinner, and chat, and show that they could still be good friends and neighbours ; and when she had finished it,

and signed herself Margery, with no Luke, she rang for the little maid, and bade her take it round to Abergeldie and bring back an answer.

'For after all,' she said to herself while she waited, standing by the fire and slowly smoothing one cold hand with the other, 'he has *sterling* qualities.'

THE END

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